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PASSAGE TO AMERICA

**The Reception of Rabindranath Tagore
in the United States,**

by **SUJIT MUKHERJEE**

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*To my Father and my Mother
neither of whom
shall see this*

PREFACE

The idea of this book germinated during early 1961 at a graduate seminar on "Cultural Interchange with America" in the Department of English of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. At that time, celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Rabindranath Tagore was being planned all over the United States, and it was possible to obtain ready and utmost cooperation from persons as well as from institutions in my undertaking to reconstruct and evaluate Tagore's passage to America.

This study has been deliberately limited to the period between Tagore's first visit to the United States and the year of his death in order to trace the reasonably continuous course of what may be called Tagore's "American" career. American writing on Tagore in this period has been treated as primary source material, and some unpublished material on Tagore available only in the United States has also been utilized. The view-point of the American reader of Tagore has constantly been kept in mind, because it is at him that this work is chiefly aimed.

A Fulbright scholarship enabled me to visit the United States in 1960, but thereafter fellowship grants from the University of Pennsylvania, to whom this has been presented as a doctoral dissertation, made it possible for me to stay on and complete the work.

7th August, 1964
Patna College, Patna

SUJIT MUKHERJEE

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Finally, to my wife Meenakshi, for her unremitting enthusiasm and concern about this, from the first written line to the last printed word.

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MAPPING THE ROUTE

The hero of one of Tagore's later novels, *Sesher kavita* (1929), quotes Whitman at a moment of rapture—"For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,/And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all." Tagore's own passage to America was not such a venture into the unknown, but his advent there was in complete fulfilment of Whitman's prophecy—"Finally shall come the poet worthy of that name." The poetic navigation of Whitman, therefore, mapped the route that Tagore was to follow to America.

We have it on the authority of the *Literary History of the United States* (New York, 1953) that when *Poetry* magazine of Chicago began publication in October 1912, it had "made much of the Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore, who was the literary sensation of the day."¹ Nearly thirty years later, the *Publisher's Weekly* of America wrote in Tagore's obituary: "Of the thirty-odd books by Tagore published in the country, twenty-two are still on the publishers' active list."² During these years, Tagore visited the United States on five different occasions, lectured and read to audiences large and small in at least twenty-one states, gained continent-wide fame, and then was forgotten.

These bare facts may explain why, on May 7, 1961, Times Square of New York City was renamed *Tagore Square* for the day—an event which not so much commemorated the one hundredth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore's birth as it was a reminder that a writer from India had, on several occasions and at various levels, impinged upon American life over a considerable period of time. No comprehensive study has yet been made of this phenomenon and the centenary year was a

1. p. 1173.

2. August 16, 1941, p. 469.

most auspicious time at which to consider the possibilities of such a study.

The subject did receive some attention in America during the centenary year in editorials, articles and lectures, but nearly all of them emphasised, not unnaturally, the occasion rather than the subject. Only two studies approached the subject at anything like a research level. One was the forty-two page booklet issued by the United States Information Service in India in three languages (English, Hindi and Bengali) entitled *Tagore and America*, written by Joseph Lester Dees;³ this booklet describes briefly, and mostly in terms of American reactions to Tagore, each visit he made to this country. The other was a long essay by Stephen N. Hay which first appeared in India in Bengali translation.⁴ This also covers all the trips and uncovers several facts from governmental documents in America hitherto unknown, but stresses Tagore's reactions to America. These two studies complement each other to some extent and together indicate the depth and range of research required for a more comprehensive work.

Summary reports on Tagore's visits to America are to be found in several general accounts in Bengali of Tagore's travels abroad.⁵ His standard biography in Bengali, that massive work in four volumes by Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay, *Rabindra-jibani o Rabindra-sahitya pravesak* (Calcutta, 1945-56), is punctuated with details of Tagore's incessant travelling inside as well as outside India. In English, Maitreyi Debi has translated her book as *The Great Wanderer* (Calcutta, 1961), while the reminiscences of Rathindranath Tagore, *On the Edges of Time* (Bombay, 1958), devote a chapter to his father's stay in America. Tagore's latest English biography, Krishna Kripalani's *Rabindranath*

3. The writer is a specialist in Middle Eastern and South Asian affairs with the United States Information Agency in Washington.

4. "Rabindranath o Amerika," trans. Nirendranath Chakravarti. *Desh* (Calcutta), May 5, 1962, pp. 65-95. Subsequently published as "Tagore and America," *American Quarterly*, XIV (Fall 1962), 439-463. The author teaches History at the University of Chicago.

5. Notably, Sisir Sen Gupta and Jayantakumar Bhaduri, *Bahir-bisve Rabindranath* (Calcutta, 1945); Jyotishchandra Ghosh, *Bisva-bhramane Rabindranath* (Calcutta, 1955); Maitreyi Debi, *Bisva-sabhaye Rabindranath* (Calcutta, 1960).

Tagore : A Biography (New York, 1962), also offers brief reviews of the American trips.

None of these books attempt at any length to measure Tagore's American trips against the impressions he made, the responses he aroused, the reactions he set in force. The only work to consider Tagore against a foreign background was Alex Aronson's *Rabindranath Through Western Eyes* (Allahabad, 1943), but this dealt primarily with a European context, including America in generalizations about "the West." Also, its assessment of Tagore against the political scene of Europe at the time puts in the shade whatever literary impact he might have made. Its basic method, however, of using material from contemporary newspapers and periodicals as the living index of current opinion would be equally valid here.

Statistics about the enormous sales of Tagore's books in America would indicate how many persons purchased them, without indicating whether these books were actually read. Then there must have been many Americans, especially between 1916 and 1930, who had seen and heard Tagore, but never read him. And since 1930, there has been a growing number of those who neither heard nor read him, but have heard about or read about him. Thus the American "image" of Tagore is a complex of at least three figures : Tagore the personality, Tagore the legend, and Tagore the writer. The personality was on display several times in America ; the legend was created by Americans writing and speaking about him ; the writer is still preserved in books published in this country. Tagore as writer must be taken to be central to the consideration, because it was from his writings that all else proceeded and it is as a writer that he will, if at all, survive.

By concentrating on Tagore as writer, an access may be found to the heart of our problem : namely, why did Tagore's reputation in America, after having achieved dizzy heights, undergo such utter decline and oblivion? The answer may not lie in the literary world alone, but it is there that the final reckoning has to be made. For this purpose, an evaluation is necessary of the literary work of Tagore as available to American readers in its relation to Tagore's total work in Bengali.

In an examination of Tagore as a writer in America, it will have to be remembered that he almost never composed in Eng-

lish, that nearly all those English titles in American publishers' lists are rendered from his original work in Bengali. At the beginning he was his own translator, a situation without precedent in the world's literature of poetry. Moreover, the volume of his work available abroad in English in the period under review, 1912 to 1941, was quite considerable, but it was only a portion of his total literary work.

Such an examination cannot ignore the extra-literary impressions created by Tagore during his personal appearances in America. Very often these led to consequences that had nothing to do with his writings and sometimes even ran counter to them. A parallel account, therefore, is necessary in order to see where the two broad areas of reaction overlap, where they are demonstrably separate, and whether they influence each other.

PART ONE

CHAPTER TWO

INTRODUCING TAGORE

On his first visit to America in 1912-13 Tagore came and went practically unnoticed. This was in great contrast to the fanfare of publicity that was to attend his second visit in 1916-17. The Nobel Prize award had no doubt helped to bring his unknown, unpronounceable¹ name to public notice in this country. But the three individuals who were responsible for introducing Tagore to American readers have to be singled out for special attention. Besides being the earliest persons to venture to write about Tagore, they were the first to record literary opinions about him, thus pioneering the critical reception that was to follow.

These persons are the expatriate American poet and critic, Ezra Pound ; the Irish poet and Nobel laureate, W. B. Yeats ; and the Indian journalist, Basanta Koomar Roy, who lived and wrote the greater part of his life in America. Pound was literally the first American to present Tagore to American readers when *Poetry* magazine, at Pound's urging, printed six poems by Tagore in its third issue. Yeats wrote a preface for the first edition of *Gitanjali* and the famous essay has reappeared in every one of the book's fifty editions. Roy wrote about Tagore in American periodicals, before he published what turned out to be the first Tagore biography in English written by an Indian to be available in America. Tagore's association with Pound and Yeats have been discussed at some length by Harold Marvin Hurwitz in "Rabindranath Tagore and England,"² but he has examined the subject mainly for possible mutual interactions between Tagore and each of the other two poets as explanation

1. "The name has a curious sound. The first time we saw it in print it did not seem real."—*Toronto Globe*, (June 9, 1914). Quoted in A. Aronson, *Rabindranath Through Western Eyes*, pp. 4-5.

2. Unpublished doctoral dissertation (Illinois, 1959), Ch. viii.

of their association. A far more vital aspect of the Pound-Tagore and Yeats-Tagore relationships, with regard to Tagore criticism, is the effect that these had on subsequent opinion about Tagore.

i. Ezra Pound

On behalf of some residents of the University of Illinois campus at Urbana in 1912, Mrs. Mayce Fries Seymour has claimed that to them belonged the privilege of being on hand when "the poetry of Rabindranath was first heard on this continent."³ But on another continent, an American had already heard it when it was being recited in a London drawing room on a June evening of 1912 ; having heard it, he set about making certain that other Americans also came to know about it. To Ezra Pound alone, therefore, belongs the credit of having brought Tagore to America.

In dedicating his *The Unwobbling Pivot and the Great Digest of Confucius* (London, 1952) to Amiya Chakravarty, Pound wrote : "The memory of Rabindranath singing his poems in London nearly four decades ago belongs in our two biographies not as prefatory matter to a living classic, though it was at Sarojini Naidu's that I met Fenollosa's widow through whom came by first contact with the great poetry of Japan and China....."⁴ Another such chance encounter had brought him in touch with Tagore's poetry on that "historical evening at Rothenstein's, when Yeats read out the *Gitanjali* poems in his musical, ecstatic voice to a choice group of people....."⁵ He was to edit and publish Fenollosa's manuscripts in a few years ; but he immediately dispatched six of Tagore's poems to Miss Harriet Monroe in a letter that was, in her words, "very exciting and imperative," saying, "This is the Scoop. Reserve space in the next number for Tagore."⁶

Pound was at this time foreign correspondent of *Poetry* and

3. "That Golden Time," *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, XXV (Summer 1959), 5.

4. Quoted in Eustace Mullins, *The Difficult Individual, Ezra Pound* (New York, 1961), p. 53.

5. Rabindranath Tagore, *On the Edges of Time*, p. 116.

6. Letter to Harriet Monroe, dated October 1912, quoted by her in *A Poet's Life : Seventy Years in a Changing World* (New York, 1938), p. 262.

he made it his job to obtain suitable contributions for the newly started magazine of verse. In an earlier letter he had told Miss Monroe : "I've just written to Yeats. It's rather hard to get anything out of him by mail.....Also I'll try to get some of the poems of the very great Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore... .."⁷ He had heard that translations of Tagore's work were being made ready for publication in a book with an introduction by Yeats, and it may have been the prospect of a "scoop" for *Poetry* that excited Pound more than his own estimate of the poems. This impression is confirmed when he closes the letter accompanying the poems with : "Its the only real fever of excitement among the inner circle of literature that I've ever seen here. And we---*Poetry*---have got six poems at the least ; and nobody else will have any."⁸

These poems were duly published in *Poetry*,⁹ along with an article by Pound which begins by saying that the appearance of these poems in English "is an event in the history of English poetry and of world poetry."¹⁰ Chronologically, this brief essay is the first critical pronouncement on Tagore made by an American and published in America ; in substance, Pound was to enlarge it into an article reviewing *Gitanjali* for the *Fortnightly Review* of London.¹¹ Pound's essay in *Poetry* and Yeats's piece in *Gitanjali*, written at nearly the same time, are heralds any poet in the twentieth century could be proud of and grateful to for announcing him.

Pound's essay treats Tagore's poetry like a renaissance whereas Yeats's preface looks upon it as a revelation. Yeats responded to the devotional nature of the verses and remembered Christian saints ; Pound remembers what "the people of Petrarch's time must have felt about the mysterious lost language, the Greek that was just being restored to Europe after centuries of deprivation" (p. 93). Where Yeats finds a culture rooted in the soil,

7. *The Letters of Ezra Pound*, ed. D. D. Paige (New York, 1950). pp. 10-11. Referred to from hereon in this chapter as *Letters EP*.

8. *A Poet's Life*. p. 262.

9. I (December 1912), 84-86. These poems appear in *Gitanjali* respectively as nos. 56, 89, 20, 32 and 67.

10. "Tagore's Poems," pp. 92-94.

11. Hurwitz's statement—"Pound did not give a written expression of his appreciation until his article in the *Fortnightly Review*..." p. 68—seems to overlook the *Poetry* essay.

Pound hears the voice of troubadours. This difference may well be the difference in taste and training between Pound and Yeats, but the variety of responses engendered in them may serve to indicate the potential qualities of Tagore's poetry for the Western reader. Both agree that the Bengali poet possesses a calmness that has been lost in European poetry ; both anticipate that Tagore has brought two disparate worlds nearer to each other.

The impression Pound gives of dealing with the poems in the original is worth special notice. He even attempts to formulate a likeness to Bengali prosody in European terms : "If you refine the art of the troubadours, combine it with that of the Pleiade, and add to that the sound-unit principle of the most advanced artists in vers libre, you would get something like the system of Bengali verse" (p. 92). This combination may be impossible to conjure up in the auditory imagination, but Pound is obviously trying to make the unfamiliar familiar and encouraging others to do so.

There is little evidence that either Pound's proclamation or the poems he commended drew much attention outside Chicago. The *Chicago Tribune* came out with an editorial praising *Poetry's* effort at being international,¹² but correspondents in the *Dial* disapproved of the way Pound seemed to be dominating *Poetry*.¹³ In her autobiography, Harriet Monroe recalls this feud : "In a second letter to the *Dial*, Mr. (Wallace) Rice 'eliminated' from the discussion 'the metrical rubbish of Mr. Lindsay, the prose of Mr. Tagore and Mr. Pound.....'"¹⁴ Outside Chicago, *Current Opinion* commented on the strange contrast presented in this issue of *Poetry* between Tagore's poems and the "noisy, robust religion" of Vachel Lindsay ;¹⁵ *Literary Digest* noted that only *Poetry* and the *Atlantic Monthly* among American periodicals had so far registered the English enthusiasm about Tagore ;¹⁶ and an article by Mrs. Seymour in the University of Illinois magazine, announcing Tagore's presence on the campus, quoted Pound's praise of him.¹⁷

12. "The Bengal Renaissance," December 2, 1912.

13. See "communications" from Wallace Rice, LIV (May 1, 1913), 370; and from William Rose Benet, LIV (June 1, 1913), 450.

14. *A Poet's Life*. p. 305.

15. "Recent Poetry," LIV (March, 1913), 236-237.

16. "Current Poetry," XLVII (August 9, 1913), 218.

17. "Rabindra Nath Tagore," *The Illinois*. IV (December, 1912), i,

Pound mentioned having heard from Tagore from Urbana in a letter to Homer Pound, his father, in January 1913.¹⁸ Two months later Pound wrote, first to Alice Corbin Henderson enclosing more poems of Tagore, then to Harriet Monroe remarking, "The Current Gossip (God what a sheet!) seems to have taken Tagore hook and all."¹⁹ The allusion is to *Current Opinion* whose March 1913 issue, in addition to the comment already noted, carried a review of *Gitanjali* which included long quotations from Pound's first essay and Yeats's introduction.²⁰ Both thereby reached a larger American public than before.

Pound's two important evaluations of Tagore appeared subsequently in English periodicals, but as both were freely drawn upon by American reviewers, they have their place in the American scene. The *Fortnightly Review* article²¹ was the first sustained piece of literary evaluation of Tagore's poetry to appear outside India. As few Western critics were to do, Pound concerns himself here at great length with the language of the original, its metres, rhymes and forms, and declares it "an ideal language for poets ; it is fluid, and the order is flexible, and all this makes for precision" (p. 572). Awareness that Tagore is "their great poet and their great musician as well" makes Pound think Tagore could "boast with the best of the troubadours, 'I made it, the words and the notes'." The correspondence of the mode of music to the sense of words interested Pound, because "it lends a curious ritualistic strength to the art. And no separate poem or song can seem a scrap or a disconnected performance, but must seem a part of the whole order of song and life" (p. 572).

At the same time, Pound does not forget that these poems are available to the West only in translation and, again unlike most critics outside India, he dwells upon the special demands this must make upon the non-Bengali reader. He reiterated this point in his other article in the *New Freewoman*,²² where

18. *Letters EP*, pp. 13-14.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 14, p. 16. In both letters, Pound refers to his latest discovery, Robert Frost, whom he calls "our second scoop." The first, by his own exclamation, was Tagore.

20. "The Lyrical Voice of Bengal," 234-235.

21. "Rabindranath Tagore," XCIX (March, 1913). 571-579.

22. "Rabindranath Tagore : His Second Book into English," I (November, 1913), 187-188.

he said. "The intelligent reader will do more than read the prose, he will try to reconstruct some idea of the original, of the long hyper-feminine rhymes, or the rhyme-arrangements like those of the long bars of the Oriental *ragini*. He will try to fit into this sound picture the meaning expressed in translation." Here, too, Pound is expecting the impossible of even the "intelligent reader," but the point he makes needed to be stressed : these poems must be judged as translations, not as originals.

In the *Fortnightly Review* article, Pound had said that if these poems have a quality that would put them at a disadvantage with the general reader, "it is that they are too pious." In the very next sentence he qualifies this by calling it "the poetic piety of Dante,"²³ but here he has unerringly touched upon what would become a familiar contention with Western critics who did not appreciate the extent or the very presence of piety in Tagore's verse. Pound could sense, as did Yeats, that this came naturally into the *Gitanjali* poems and was entirely personal to Tagore : most others found it didactic when they did not think it merely strange.

While accounting for Pound's interest in Tagore, Harold Hurwitz cites the former's poems like "Ballad for Gloom" and "Greek Epigrams" to support his inference that "Pound must also have found the devotional nature of many of the *Gitanjali* lyrics appealing, for some of his early poems also have an element of piety to them."²⁴ Yet in a letter to Harriet Monroe on April 22, 1913, Pound said, "As a religious teacher he [Tagore] is superfluous. We've got Lao-Tse. And his (Tagore's) philosophy hasn't much in it for a man who has 'felt the pangs' or been pestered with Western civilization."²⁵ Pound discounts Tagore's Vedic inspiration and fears that, stripped of the verbal merits peculiar to the original, the translation might seem "mere theosophy." Already (and this is only April 1913, long before the spate of Tagore's books began, following the Nobel award) Pound is anxious that Tagore must not take to "printing anything except his best work."

23. Earlier in the article, p. 574, he had said : "To find fitting comparison for the content of the volume before us I am compelled to one sole book of my acquaintance, the *Paradiso* of Dante."

24. p. 73.

25. *Letters EP*, p. 19.

Pound's stand in this letter—"So long as he [Tagore] sticks to poetry he can be defended on stylistic grounds against those who disagree with his content"—is thoroughly revised by Pound himself when he reviewed Tagore's second collection of poems, *The Gardener*, for the *New Freewoman* in its November 1913 issue. Here Pound talks of Tagore's "emotional contact with nature," his "sense of life-flow and sun-flow," his "mythopoeic sense"—phrases which are obviously laudatory, but their critical direction is ambiguous since Pound neither explains nor illustrates them. Instead, on their basis, he awards Tagore "a certain place in world literature." He does, however, warn against confusing this with Tagore's place in Bengali literature and, more widely, in the literature of contemporary India.

If this essay is unsatisfactory as literary criticism, its first half is important in its denunciation of the nature of the reception given to Tagore's work in England. The pernicious tendency to assess Tagore by assessing his admirers runs through much of writing about Tagore in the West. Pound seems to have foreseen this when he blamed "Tagore's entourage" for presenting him "as a religious teacher rather than as artist" and lamented that "the good people of this island are unable to honor a fine artist as such." The review ends with Pound recommending "the under-running quality of the emotion, not in the verbal felicities" of these poems, which is in direct contradiction to his earlier advocacy of Tagore's style rather than of his content. Anyway, this was the last time Pound was to recommend anything in Tagore to anybody.²⁶

There is no word on Tagore from Pound for the next four years. This suggests that after having met him at a "terribly literary dinner" in London on May 31, 1913,²⁷ Pound lost touch with Tagore. On his 1916-17 trip Tagore went by way of Japan to America. News of this much-publicized visit could not but have reached Pound and he referred to it as "the dog's life of a

26. One minor exception may be noted. In a letter of January 1914 to his mother, Pound credits Tagore with possessing the critical insight to admire a series of Pound's poems which appeared in *Poetry* in April, 1913: "...As for Tagore, you may comfort yourself with the reflection that it was Tagore who poked my 'Contemporania' down the Chicago gullet." See *Letters EP.*, p. 29.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

Tagore-as-at-present" in a letter to John Quinn on January 24, 1917.²⁸ Next day we find him writing to Iris Barry that Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize because "after the cleverest boom of our day, after the fiat of the omnipotent literati of distinction, he lapsed into religion and optimism and was boomed by pious non-conformists."²⁹ The sardonic tone of both of these allusions to Tagore foreshadow the sharpness of an attack that came soon after to confirm what Hurwitz calls "a sad epilogue, the admiration and love.....within a few years changing into resentment and hostility."³⁰ As will be seen later, Yeats's disassociation from Tagore also seems to have begun about the same time.

For some years now Pound had been working on the Fenollosa manuscripts : when some of these were published as *Certain Noble Plays of Japan* (London, 1916) and *Noh—or Accomplishment* (London, 1916), Pound reviewed them for yet another new magazine, this time American, the *Little Review*.³¹ After a few sentences about the books under review, Pound turns unexpectedly to Tagore—"This Japanese stuff is not so important as the Chinese work left by Fenollosa, but on the other hand it is infinitely better than Tagore and the backwash from India. Motokiyo and the fourteenth century Japanese poets are worth more than Kabir. Fenollosa has given us more than Tagore has."

It would seem in that last sentence that Pound is comparing Tagore with Fenollosa (and perhaps with himself) as translator and editor of medieval literature, because Tagore had selected and rendered into English a collection of songs of the fifteenth century Indian mystic, Kabir.³² The fact that the publications under review here were of Pound's own editing would then explain what amounts to some self-aggrandisement. But claiming the right to "dispraise Tagore now" because he had been among the first to praise him, Pound measures out what he calls "the

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 103-105

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.

30. p. 76. n. 25.

31. IV (August, 1917), 8-9.

32. *Songs of Kabir* (New York, 1915).

Pound had once interested himself in Kabir. He wrote to his father in June, 1913, "I enclose a note from Koli Mahon Ghose, who has been translating Kabir with me." See *Letters EP*, p. 20.

decadence of Tagore" by saying that Tagore's first translations had the assistance of Yeats, then he took the help of Evelyn Underhill, and now he had started writing in English himself.

Mainly, however, Pound blames Tagore for having become a "popular fad" and of letting his works become "commercial property," thereby betraying his literary integrity. He rightly charges Tagore's publishers and his followers with having made the Indian poet "popular." But it is difficult to see how the mere fact of popularity should debase that which was of permanent worth in Tagore's work, a worth Pound himself had discovered and proclaimed not so long before. With Pound—as with Yeats—it would seem that once Tagore had moved out of their protective shade, he had lost favour with them merely by having done so.

At least two factual errors in Pound's denunciation dilute it somewhat. One is when he presumes that Tagore "has taken to writing in English, a language for which he has no special talent." Pound was not alone in making this mistake, which in some ways is a compliment to Tagore.³³ In reality, Tagore wrote letters in English to those who did not know Bengali and some of his later essays were written directly in English, but he almost never composed poetry in any other language but his own.³⁴ The other is where Pound declares "Sir Rabindranath having been raised in a country where the author need not defend himself against blandishment—I mean the force of the habu press is scarcely enough to turn anyone's head or his judgment....." In actual fact, whatever blandishment that came Tagore's way at home was more than counter-balanced by the constant stream of denigration from Bengali critics almost from the outset of

33. Two other examples of this mistake are :

"Unlike some of the author's later work, these stories were first written in his native tongue."—*Book Review Digest* XII (1916), 534.

"It was only later that he undertook actual composition in English"—Brooks Henderson, in *Columbia University Courses in Literature* (New York, 1928), i, 485.

34. Among the rare instances are the verses for singing he wrote for the London production in July 1912, of George Calderon's *The Maharani of Arakan* (London, 1915), which was adapted from a short story by Tagore entitled "Dalia." Some of these verses are quoted in *Rabindra-jibani*, ii, 328-329.

Other instances have been referred to later in Chapter Six.

his literary career.³⁵ These two misconceptions argue a lack of information on Pound's part that would be true of many other Western critics. They passed judgment on the basis of evidence available to them ; that this was seldom adequate, and often misguided, is a vital factor in the decline of Tagore's reputation in both England and America.

Pound says at the end of this review that "there is still time for him [Tagore] to suppress about three-fourths of the stuff..... he has published in English, and retain some sort of literary position." Though not suppressed deliberately by Tagore, this proportion of his English work has gone into oblivion by the neglect which it began to encounter within a few years after Pound's warning. Having spoken his last word on Tagore, Pound has been silent ever since on the subject. The letter to Amiya Chakravarty quoted at the beginning of this section shows that Pound remembers the first impact Tagore made on him. When Tagore's latest biographer visited Pound at Rapallo in 1959, Pound was able to recall an anecdote related to him by Tagore nearly half a century ago.³⁶

ii. W. B. Yeats

"From about 1912 through 1915," wrote Richard Ellmann in his second book on the Irish poet, "Yeats felt his blood stirred, as he said, by Rabindranath Tagore."³⁷ This stirring may be seen in Yeats's introduction to *Gitanjali*, in his own letters, and in Sir William Rothenstein's memoirs.³⁸ Among recent students of Yeats, A. G. Stock is the latest to remark on the common poetic purpose that drew together the Indian and the Irishman.³⁹

35. Except for some allusions to this in Edward Thompson's *Rabindranath Tagore : Poet and Dramatist* (London, 1926 , rev. ed. 1948), very little account of it is available in English.

A recent Bengali volume, Aditya Ohdedar's *Rabindra-sahitya Samalochanor dhara* (Calcutta, 1961) has documented in chronological order all the important critical estimates of Tagore's work throughout his career

36. Kripalani, *A Biography*, p. 204, n. 1.

37. *The Identity of Yeats* (New York, 1954), p. 183.

38. *Men and Memories*, 2 vols. (New York, 1932), and *Since Fifty* (New York, 1940).

39. See *W. B. Yeats : His Poetry and Thought* (London, 1961), pp. 8-9.

Because of the sensational sales of *Gitanjali* bearing Yeats's introduction, it is often thought that Tagore's poetry was discovered for the English-speaking world by Yeats. This is only partially true because Tagore was "discovered" in this sense primarily by Rothenstein, whose reminiscences are the best source for verifying the popular misconceptions regarding Yeats's role in introducing Tagore to the West. Although Rothenstein had met Tagore personally during a trip to India in 1910-11, he came across Tagore's work only afterwards.⁴⁰ Then he consulted Yeats, and this led to Yeats's spell of enchantment with Tagore.⁴¹ And it was only at Rothenstein's persuasion, strengthened with the promise of a preface by Yeats, that the India Society of London undertook to publish the first edition of *Gitanjali*.⁴² In his book on Yeats, Joseph Hone has said that Rothenstein "acted as Tagore's cicerone in London,"⁴³ and the appellation barely does justice to the numerous ways in which Rothenstein helped Tagore. Tagore's letters in the Houghton Library collection are permanent proof of this.

The assumption that Tagore did not know any English before he translated *Gitanjali* has sometimes led to misplaced admiration of Tagore's ability to have learned English so quickly and well, also to some exaggeration of Yeats's part in the translations. Thus Ursula Bridge informs us, "Yeats who wrote the introduction to *Gitanjali* had helped Tagore to learn English."⁴⁴ Anyone vaguely familiar with Indian history of the time would know that Tagore could not have been wholly ignorant of the English language for fifty years of his life. Also, Tagore visited England as a student in 1879 and again in 1890, thus he could not have remained ignorant of English. He did acknowledge later that Yeats enabled him to obtain a greater mastery of the English language, and that Yeats helped his English "to attain some

40. Rothenstein, *Men and Memories*, ii, 262-263. Also, see his "Yeats as a Painter Saw Him," in *Scattered Branches*, ed. Stephen Gwynne (London, 1940), pp. 43-44.

41. See James H. Cousins' introductory essay in A. C. Bose, *Three Mystic Poets* (Kolhapur, India, 1945), pp. v, x.

42. Sir Francis Younghusband, address at India Society Memorial meeting, *Indian Arts and Letters*, XV : 2 (1941), 1.

43. *W. B. Yeats* (New York, 1943), p. 281.

44. *W. B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore : Their Correspondence* (London, 1953), p. 190.

quality of permanence ; ”⁴⁵ and when Robert Bridges sought permission to publish a Tagore poem in which Bridges himself had made revisions, Tagore was very unwilling to accept any changes other than those supervised by Yeats.⁴⁶ An editorial note in the standard collection of Yeats’s letters makes it quite clear that Yeats “made hardly any alterations in the English of the translations, which were by Tagore himself.”⁴⁷ And Rothenstein, who knew best, has settled the matter for all time by declaring, “I knew that it was said in India that the success of *Gitanjali* was largely owing to Yeats’ re-writing of Tagore’s English. That this is false can easily be proved. The original manuscript of *Gitanjali* in English and in Bengali are in my possession. Yeats did here and there suggest slight changes, but the main text was printed as it came from Tagore’s hands.”⁴⁸

Tagore was rather sensitive to this canard because of the reflection it made on his integrity, both as a man and as a poet. He confessed to Rothenstein, “It is annoyingly insulting for me to be constantly suspected of being capable of enjoying a reputation by fraud...”⁴⁹ Again, in explaining his reluctance about Bridges’ revision, he wrote, “I must not give men any reasonable ground for accusing me—and they do—of reaping advantage of other men’s genius and skill.”⁵⁰ He admitted “one is apt to delude himself, and it is very easy for me to gradually forget the share Yeats had in making my things possible,” but as he misplaced the typed pages on which Yeats had pencilled his corrections,⁵¹ we shall never know what revisions Yeats had suggested nor ever determine Yeats’s hand in the revisions actually made.

45. Letter to Rothenstein, quoted in *Since Fifty*, p. 112.

46. Letter to Rothenstein, quoted in *Men and Memories*, ii, 300-301.

47. *Letters of Yeats*, ed. Allan Wade (New York, 1955), p. 570. Referred to from here on in this chapter as *Letters Y*.

48. *Men and Memories*, ii, 301. On p. 262, Rothenstein describes Tagore’s handing over the manuscript to him.

This “original manuscript” is now in the archives of the Houghton Library among the papers of Sir William Rothenstein. This collection is referred to from here on as *Papers WR*.

49. From portion of a letter to Rothenstein in *Papers WR*, no. 60. The first page is missing and it has not yet been dated.

50. Letter to Rothenstein dated April 4, 1915, quoted in *Men and Memories*, ii, 300-301. Original in *Papers WR*, no. 63.

51. *Ibid.*

Whatever may have been Yeats's share in the actual text of *Gitanjali*, the introduction was all his own. It is generally treated as one of the classic Western appraisals of Tagore, but in many ways it reveals more of Yeats himself than it explains of Tagore. The sense of an immediate personal response that Yeats conveys in these pages set the tradition of Tagore-appreciation in the West for a long time. Critics intermittently discovered themselves in Tagore's work—which was the highest form of praise they could bestow, but it was not the best form of literary appreciation and the raptures often rebounded adversely upon Tagore.

Thus C. Lewis Hind, speaking about *Gitanjali*, said, "It has an amazing introduction by W. B. Yeats...I have given up trying to account for what an Irish poet will say or do,"⁵² and Joyce Kilmer was ready to disown Yeats altogether: "Mr. William Butler Yeats was once a poet. But he never was a critic He is so very bad as a critic that his criticisms have a certain picturesque charm."⁵³ The most consistently hostile attitude was that of the *Nation* which used Yeats to beat Tagore with in review after review, culminating in an article by Paul Elmer More where he found it most significant "that Tagore's first volume was introduced to us with a preface by Mr. Yeats. These poems are dear to that haunter of a paradise of bloodless hours."⁵⁴ Such views, inimical primarily to Yeats, suggest that because he himself was not widely admired in America then, some of the opprobrium against him passed on to Tagore.

Yeats's first collection of verse, *Crossways* (1889), contained three poems with Indian themes,⁵⁵ and it may be said that his interest in India precedes his meeting Tagore by many years. Even if he had had no background in Indian literature and philosophy, Hurwitz suggests, "it is still very likely that he would have been impressed by the Indian poet, for temperamentally they were very much alike," and he stresses the similarity between Yeats's position in Ireland and Tagore's in India.⁵⁶ But even

52. "Rabindranath Tagore," *More Authors and I* (New York, 1922), p. 290.

53. "Rabindranath Tagore," *America*, XIII (July 17, 1915), 355.

54. "Rabindranath Tagore," *Nation*, CIII (November 30, 1916), 507.

55. These poems are: "Anashuya and Vijaya," "The Indian Upon God," and "The Indian to His Love."

56. "Rabindranath Tagore and England," pp. 79-83.

more than for reasons of previous interest in India or of temperamental likeness. Yeats seems to have responded to Tagore's achievement in having expressed a total culture through the poetic medium. It is almost with a note of envy that Yeats says in his introduction, "These lyrics...display in their thought a world I have dreamed of all my life long. The work of a supreme culture, they yet appear as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes."⁵⁷ And again, "A whole people, a whole civilization, immeasurably strange to us, seems to have been taken up into this imagination, and yet we are not moved because of its strangeness, but because we have met our own image...or heard, perhaps for the first time in literature, our voice as in a dream" (pp. xvi-xvii). It is not to Tagore as the exotic product of a fabled land that Yeats pays homage here, but to the poetic phenomenon that was Tagore.

That such poetry was possible at all in the twentieth century impressed Yeats considerably. In contrast, he found : "We have to do so much in our own country, that our minds gradually cease to be creative...Four-fifths of our energy is spent in quarrel with bad taste, whether in our minds or in the minds of others."⁵⁸ Writing to Tagore nearly twenty years later, Yeats said the same thing in another way : "...and life, when I think of it separated from all that is not itself, from all that is complicated and mechanical, takes to my imagination an Asiatic form. That form I found first in your books..."⁵⁹

Another aspect of the *Gitanjali* poems which drew Yeats's special wonder was that Tagore continued the tradition "where poetry and religion are the same thing, has passed through the centuries, gathering from learned and unlearned metaphor and emotion"... (p. xiv), a tradition Yeats had himself hoped to revive in Ireland. Later Yeats is said to have been critical of Tagore's

57. p. xiv. Quotations from the introduction are from *Gitanjali* (New York, 1961).

58. p. xii. Allan Wade relates that Robert Bridges wrote to Yeats in April 1913 generously praising this essay, but requested that Yeats should change the phrase "Four-fifths of our energy." Yeats replied, "You are quite right about that fraction and if I should ever reprint the essay.....I will change it." See *Letters Y*, pp. 580-581.

The fraction, however, remains unaltered in all later reprints.

59. Letter, in *The Golden Book of Tagore*, ed. Ramananda Chatterjee (Calcutta, 1931), n. 269.

excessive piety,⁶⁰ but in his initial excitement over the simplicity and sincerity of Tagore's devotional verse, Yeats harked back to Thomas a'Kempis and St. John of the Cross and St. Francis to find parallels.

By some act of poetic intuition, Yeats recognised these two vital elements of Tagore's poetry as contained in the *Gitanjali* poems—an integrated view of life and a habitually religious turn of mind. Yeats also noted that these poems were songs in the original and thus belonged to a tradition wholly defunct in the modern West. Of course Yeats—like Pound—had had opportunity of hearing these songs in the original as sung by Tagore himself, an opportunity denied to others who merely read them in translation.

When he wrote to Rothenstein about the essay, Yeats said, "In the first little chapter I have given what Indians have said to me about Tagore—their praise of him and their description of his life. That I am anxious about—some fact may be given wrongly...My essay is an impression, I give no facts except those in the quoted conversations."⁶¹ In fact, the entire first section is a free rendering of conversations with "a distinguished Bengali doctor of medicine" and other Indians.⁶² Yeats was rightly anxious about the accuracy of statements made so casually. This part of Yeats's essay passed into the widest circulation, was treated as authentic and representative Indian attitude towards Tagore, and many opinions offered spontaneously here became critical commonplaces. Incidentally, some biographical information about Tagore came to light in these pages.

Meanwhile, Yeats continued to cultivate Tagore. In a letter to Edmund Gosse sometime in November 1912, Yeats proposed that Tagore should be elected to what he refers to here as "our

60. Both Joseph Hone, *W. B. Yeats*, p. 491 and Richard Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats*, p. 54 make this inference from a remark Yeats made to "a Hindu professor" in Dublin in 1937. The Hindu professor in question, Abinash Chandra Bose, recalls meeting Yeats but does not mention the above remark in his *Three Mystic Poets* (Kolhapur, India, 1945), pp. 33-34.

61. *Letters Y*, pp. 569-70. Also quoted in *Men and Memories*, ii, 266-267.

62. None of these men were identified by Yeats, and they have often intrigued Tagore scholars. Dr. Amiya Chakravarty informs me in a personal letter that the "doctor of medicine" was Dr. Dwijendranath Mitra.

Committee.”⁶³ When Tagore returned to England from America in 1913 and was received as a house guest in Mrs. Harriet Moody’s London residence, Yeats visited him there.⁶⁴ Before Tagore went home, Yeats had the Irish Players produce Tagore’s play, *The Post Office*, in London. About the performance, Harriet Moody wrote to Charlotte Moody, “It made a great impression on me, but I must say I don’t think the Irish Players the best ones to have produced it.”⁶⁵ Next year the play was printed and published by Elizabeth Yeats from the Cuala Press in Dundrum (Ireland) with a preface by Yeats.

In the summer of 1915, we find Yeats interceding between Robert Bridges and Tagore to have the latter consent to have the former’s revision of a Tagore poem included in Bridges’ anthology, *The Spirit of Man* (New York, 1916).⁶⁶ A letter to Lady Gregory from London, postmarked April 10, 1916, has Yeats enumerating his heavy load of work that spring, including “two books of verse by Tagore to be revised for Macmillan who has no notion of the job it is.”⁶⁷

These two books would be *Fruit-Gathering* (New York, 1916) and *Stray Birds* (New York, 1916) though there is no information regarding Yeats’s participation in these books, as there is about the previous volumes of Tagore’s verse. Nor is there further mention of Tagore’s work in Yeats’s correspondence for the next fifteen years, suggesting that at least their literary partnership was over. When Yeats was approached for a contribution to *The Golden Book of Tagore* in 1930, he was unwilling to be a party to the formality and wrote to Rothenstein on September

63. *Letters Y*, p. 573.

Allan Wade notes here : “It does not appear that Rabindranath Tagore was elected to the Academic Committee”. Ezra Pound also makes a reference to “.....the British Academic Committee, who had turned down Tagore (on account of his biscuit complexion).....” *Letters EP*, p. 105. Presumably, the reference is to the British Academy.

64. Olivia Dunbar, *A House in Chicago* (Chicago, 1947), p. 101.

65. Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 99.

66. *Letters Y*, pp. 598-599.

Tagore’s letter to Rothenstein on this subject has been already cited several times. Bridges’ letter to Rothenstein concerning this will be found in *Men and Memories*, ii. 299. An extract from Tagore’s letter to Bridges is quoted in another Tagore letter to Rothenstein, hitherto unpublished, now in *Papers WR*, letter no. 66.

67. *Letters Y*, pp. 611-612.

4th, "Probably I shall send nothing because I hate sending mere empty compliments and have time for nothing else. I shall write to Tagore privately."⁶⁸ What he wrote privately was published in *The Golden Book*, and the letter contains perhaps the finest tribute in the whole volume : "I ...want to tell you that I am still your most loyal student and admirer."⁶⁹ That this was no idle tribute Yeats proved by including six of Tagore's poems in the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse : 1892-1935* (New York, 1936).⁷⁰ The nature of the selections in the entire volume provoked much criticism in both England and America.⁷¹ Giving reasons for many of his inclusions and omissions in the long introductory essay he wrote for this volume, Yeats justified Tagore's choice as his being among the "notable translators" of this period.

Yeats's last noteworthy reference to Tagore is in a letter to Rothenstein.⁷² The relevant portion of this letter deserves to be quoted in full because its parts in isolation can be distorted to fit interpretations Yeats may not have meant :

Riversdale

My dear Rothenstein,

Damn Tagore. We got out three goods books, Sturge Moore and I, and then, because he thought it more important to see and know English than to be a great poet, he brought out sentimental rubbish and wrecked his reputation. Tagore does not know English, no Indian knows English. Nobody can write with music and style in a language not learned in childhood and ever since the language of his thought. I shall return to the question of Tagore but not yet—I shall return to it because he has published, in recent (? years), and in English, prose books of great beauty, and these books have been ignored because of the eclipse of his reputation as a poet...

68. *Since Fify*, p. 179.

69. p. 269.

70. These poems are respectively *Gitanjali* : LXXVI, LXXIX, XCIII, LXIV ; *The Gardener* : XVII, LXII ; and *Gitanjali* : LXXV. See introduction, p. xi, for reference to Tagore.

71. John Hayward called it "Mr. Yeats's Book of Modern Verse" in the London *Spectator*, CLVII (November 20, 1936), sup. 3 ; Margaret Widdemer called it "Yeats's Book of Favorite Modern Verse" in the New York *Times*, (December 13, 1936), p. 2.

72. *Letters Y*, pp. 834-835. Probable date May 7, 1935.

Yeats never did "return to the question of Tagore" and many of his remarks here remain ambiguous. That violent opening epithet is sometimes quoted as evidence of Yeats's ultimate rejection of the Indian poet ; Prabhat Mukhopadhyay condemned it as "an unseemly statement by Yeats in his old age."⁷³ Yet Yeats seems to have kept up with Tagore's English publications and found new avenues to Tagore besides his poetry.⁷⁴ Since Tagore seldom composed in English, the assertion about Indians being unable to use English creatively does not apply to Tagore ; yet in his meeting with A. C. Bose in 1937 reported by Joseph Hone, Yeats had said, "Let Tagore cast off English."⁷⁵ What he means in blaming Tagore for thinking it "more important to see and know English" is not clear. But that he is concerned with Tagore as a "great poet" confirms what has been suggested earlier in this chapter, namely that Yeats's primary interest was in Tagore as a writer and not in his origin or his beliefs or his personality.

iii. B. K. Roy

It may seem out of place to mention the forgotten, free-lance journalist Basanta Koomar Roy in the same context as writers of the stature of Ezra Pound and W. B. Yeats. But from our point of view here, Roy is not less important a means by which Tagore became better known in America. Through articles, translations and the biography he wrote, Roy became "most closely associated in the minds of the American public with the name of Tagore."⁷⁶ He died in New York on June 5, 1949 and his part in propagating Tagore in this country has never been adequately recognised, much less praised.

Though he apparently made a living in journalism in America, details about his career are difficult to obtain. The obituary notice in the *New York Times* of June 8, 1949 offers only this : "Born in Orissa Province, India, and a member of the Brahmin caste, Mr. Roy came to the United States around 1910 and

73. Translated, *Robindra-jibani*, ii, 328, n. 2.

74. In the *Golden Book* letter, Yeats had said, ".....of recent years I have found wisdom and beauty, or both, in your prose," p. 269.

75. *W. B. Yeats*, p. 491.

76. Editor's note, *Open Court*, XVII (July 1913).

studied at the University of Wisconsin, from which he was graduated and where he was later an extension lecturer." An editorial note in the *Open Court* magazine adds that for a time he conducted a department in this Chicago periodical entitled "Current Thought in the Orient."⁷⁷

The *Times* obituary mentions that Roy "was long a writer and speaker for Indian freedom and had been active in the Friends of Freedom for India." This explains why, in his book on Tagore, Roy has insisted in many places that although Tagore is looked upon as a religious poet in the West, in his native Bengal he was most widely known as a patriotic poet.⁷⁸ This is where Roy had the advantage over Pound or Yeats as a Tagore commentator, namely that he could read Tagore in the original and had first hand knowledge of the Bengal Tagore lived in and wrote about. Roy's biography was as widely reviewed as Ernest Rhys's book on Tagore, which was published at nearly the same time, and some reviewers seemed to prefer Roy's book simply because it was written by a Bengali Indian.⁷⁹

Having spoken and read Bengali at the turn of the century, Roy could scarcely have remained unaffected by Tagore, but the precise nature of his association with the poet in India is difficult to ascertain. In America, he called on Tagore in January 1913 at Urbana where the poet spent a few months with his son and daughter-in-law during his first visit to this country. Roy has claimed that at this meeting he discussed the possibility that through translating his work into English, Tagore would

77. *Ibid.*

78. In this connection, see Ezra Pound's letter to his father in January, 1913 (*Letters EP*, pp. 13-14) in which Pound recounts an anecdote regarding the Indian controversy over the question of Tagore's patriotism, provoked by Tagore's writing a song invoking "the guide of India's destiny" for the 1911 annual session of the Indian National Congress Party, the timing of which happened to coincide with the visit to India of King George V of England, then Emperor of India.

The controversy has been most exhaustively examined in *Rabindra-jibani*, ii, appendix, 524-534. The song in question is now India's national anthem.

79. For reviews, see *Boston Evening Transcript*, (June 9, 1915), p. 4 ; *Dial*, LVIII (June 10, 1915), 549 ; *Independent*, LXXXII (June 14, 1915), 472 ; *Nation*, C (June 17, 1915), 687 ; *New York Times*, (July 25, 1915), p. 269 ; *Bookman*, XLI (August 1915), 660 ; *Springfield Republican*, (August 26, 1915), p. 5.

not merely propagate Bengali literature to the world but could even be considered for the Nobel Prize. Whereupon Tagore inquired, "Are the Asiatics eligible for the prize?"⁸⁰ Such a claim is questionable, especially when we note that Roy waited two years to make public his prophecy. Tagore's alleged query, too, seems to relate to the aftermath of the award.

Soon after this meeting with Tagore, Roy wrote his first article on Tagore in which he declared, "if his [Tagore's] verses are read by the thousands, they are known by heart, sung, and recited by the millions. No Western poet has ever had such a constituency of contemporaries."⁸¹ Here also he set up the rather oversimplified thesis that Tagore had been a poet of romantic love in his youth, but through doubt and despair following some personal tragedies, had now become a poet of devotion. Following Tagore's emergence into world fame through the Nobel award, Roy was quick to take advantage of his knowledge of Bengali for translating from the original. Tagore's Bengali essay on Yeats, published in the *Prabashi* monthly of Calcutta in 1912, appeared as "A Hindu on the Celtic Spirit," rendered into English by Roy, in the *Review of Reviews*.⁸² Another Tagore essay translated by Roy appeared in *Harper's Weekly* of April 11, 1914 as "Oriental and Occidental Music." Later Roy was to translate a poem, "East and West," for the *Independent* of October 2, 1916 ; and a short story, "Bepin Babu, the Victim of Jealousy," for the *Boston Post* of December 10, 1916.

Roy's most extended effort in Tagore's cause in America was, of course, the biography which was published with an introductory essay by Hamilton W. Mabie. There is little that was new in the book, because it really expands and combines that first article in the *Open Court* with three others which appeared elsewhere—"The Personality of Tagore," in which Roy drew from Tagore's reminiscences, *Jiban-smriti* (Silaidaha, India, 1912), to write biographically ;⁸³ "Tagore and His Model School

80. *Rabindranath Tagore : The Man and His Poetry* (New York, 1915), pp. 191-193.

81. "India's Greatest Living Poet," *Open Court*, XXVII (July, 1913), 385.

82. XLIX (January 1914), 101-102. The original essay is in *Rabindra-rachanavali* (Tagore's standard collected works), xi, 521-528.

83. *Yale Review*, ns III (April 1914), 471-485.

at Bolpur," a rather factual account of the aims and routine of Santiniketan, perhaps the first such account to appear in America;⁸⁴ and "Tagore—an Oriental Estimate," where he attempts to trace the heritage of Tagore's poetry in order place him in the Indian tradition.⁸⁵ To all this, Roy added a few anecdotes and many translations from poems Tagore had not yet rendered into English.

A reviewer in the *Independent* voiced a common and natural reaction to the book when he said, "In a sense this book is peculiarly authoritative, for written by a fellow-countryman, it gives the viewpoint of the East." Also, in the absence of any other source, its biographical material was taken to be authentic. But the *Nation* remarked, "when Mr. Roy ceases to be a biographer and becomes a critic, there are things said of a kind to make a cautious reader hold his breath." Harrison Smith said this even more candidly in the *Bookman* : "...before the end of the book one becomes a little tired of his constant reminders of his idol's overwhelming superiority, as if he were a minor god..."⁸⁶

As critical commentary, the book is unacceptable in many parts ; its biographical accuracy may be questioned at places. But nothing can diminish its historical importance in having appeared in America when it did.⁸⁷

iv. The Nobel Prize

If Pound and Yeats and Roy were instrumental in engaging the literary attention of America upon Tagore, the Swedish Academy in Stockholm was responsible for introducing Tagore to the American public at large. Looking back upon her association with the poet, Harriet Monroe wrote : "Soon after New Year's Day [1913] Mr. Tagore arrived...This was a year before his Nobel Prize award and all its attendant publicity. So we were able to get acquainted with the poet without interference from the world's curiosity."⁸⁸ The publicity value of the award may easily be imagined, but much more than the world's curio-

84. *Independent*, LXXIX (August 3, 1914), 162-165.

85. *Bookman*, XLI (March 1915), 79-84.

86. For sources quoted in this paragraph, see n. 79 above.

87. Aronson notes, p. 126, that the first Swedish biography of Tagore, P. G. Norburg's *Rabindranath Tagore* (Stockholm, 1916), was a translation of Roy's book.

88. "Tagore in Chicago," *The Golden Book*, p. 169.

sity was aroused. In America, it was chiefly puzzlement which gave rise to a wide spectrum of attitudes varying from resentment at one extreme, to rationalization at the other.

Not too much about the actual developments leading to Tagore's nomination to the award was known until the Tagore centenary year, when for the first time some details were published. The formal proposal of Tagore's name was made by the English poet and fellow of the Royal Academy, T. Sturge Moore, who had collaborated with Yeats in preparing the text of some of Tagore's verse translations.⁸⁹ The proposal naturally took the selection committee by surprise and the then Chairman, Harald Hjarne, "was unwilling to commit himself and expressed the opinion that it must be difficult to decide how much in Tagore's enchanting poetry was his personal creation and how much must be attributed to the classical traditions of Indian literature."⁹⁰ But the Swedish writer, Verner von Heidenstam, who was to win the same award three years later, wrote an eloquent report supporting Tagore's candidature. Heidenstam had read *Gitanjali* both in English as well as in Swedish-Norwegian rendering,⁹¹ and he urged the Committee, "Now that we have have finally found an ideal poet of really great stature, we should not pass him over. For the first time and perhaps for the last for a long time to come, it would be vouchsafed us to discover a great name before it has appeared in all the newspapers."⁹² Another enthusiastic supporter was Per Hallstrom, then Member-Secretary of the Committee. Hallstrom had read *The Gardener* as well, and his long report included this comment : "In a way it goes against the grain to associate a monetary prize with this purely religious poetry. It is like paying for the Psalms (of David) or the songs of St. Francis."⁹³ On November 13, 1913, the news went round the world that the Nobel Prize for idealis-

89. The letter of proposal is given by Krishna Kripalani in *Tagore : A Life* (New Delhi, 1961), pp. 121-122, also in this author's *Rabindranath Tagore : A Biography* (1962), n. 15, p. 228.

90. Anders Osterling, "Tagore and the Nobel Prize," *A Centenary Volume: Rabindranath Tagore* (New Delhi, 1961), p. 203.

91. This may be the translation by Andrea Butenschon, cited by Aronson, p. 139.

92. From extract quoted in article by Osterling (n. 90, above), p. 203.

93. "Tagore and the Nobel Prize," *Indian Literature*, IV (1961), p. 11. The full text of this report in English translation is given here.

tic literature had been awarded this year to Rabindranath Tagore —“For reason of the inner depth and the high aim revealed in his poetic writings ; also for the brilliant way in which he translates the beauty and freshness of his Oriental thought into the accepted forms of Western belles-letters.”⁹⁴

The news was startling enough to cause the *New York Times* to err in transcribing Tagore's first name as “Babindranath” when it reported the reward in its issue of November 14, 1913.⁹⁵ In the second sentence of this report, the *Times* made a distinction whose echoes were to be heard for many years to come : “It is the first time that this prize has been given to anybody but a white person.” Other American papers promptly reproduced the sense of this sentence with various emphases to the racial reference.⁹⁶ The *Times* sought to repair the damage belatedly the next day with self-disparaging remarks about racial prejudice in the West, but actually made it worse by mentioning, as a consolation, that “Babindranath Tagore, if not exactly one of us, is, as an Aryan, a distant relation of all white folk.”⁹⁷ The only other time Tagore's racial origin came under serious discussion was in Germany in 1921, when it was debated whether he was Aryan or Semitic.⁹⁸

The *New York Times*, in fact, continued to flounder badly in trying to decide its proper stand on Tagore. A week later

94. As inscribed on the prize, quoted by Annie Russell Marble, *The Nobel Prize Winners in Literature* (New York, 1925), p. 159.

95. The mistake was repeated next day in the “Topics of the Times” section. The name was not printed correctly until a fortnight later.

96. For example :

“This is the first time on record that it has been given to anybody but a white person.”—Utica (N. Y.) *Herald Despatch*, November 15, 1913.

“It has gone.....to a Hindu, the first time it has been won by any but a white person.”—Augusta (Ga.) *Chronicle*, November 20, 1913.

“The award.....to a Hindu of Bengal, is the first instance of any of the Nobel prizes going to a brown, black or yellow man.”—Providence (R. I.) *Tribune*, November 22, 1913.

“The awarding.....to a Hindu has occasioned much chagrin and no little surprise among writers of the Caucasian race. They cannot understand why the distinction was bestowed upon one who is not white.”—Macon (Ga.) *News*, November 20, 1913, quoted by Aronson, p. 4.

The first three examples are taken from a micro-film of press-clippings in the Harvard University Library, referred to from here on as *HUMic*.

97. “Our Case Isn't Desperate,” November 15, 1913, p. 10.

98. See Aronson, pp. 61-64.

it complained about the lack of information about Tagore in America, saying that even "that vast storehouse of information, the New York Public Library," contained only two Tagore items on its index, and added that the poet of Bengal was virtually unknown outside his own country.⁹⁹ This brought an emphatic denial from a certain Joseph Kummerle of New York City who asserted, "Long before the Nobel Prize was adjudged to his poetical talent, the literary, nay, the philosophical world in Europe, especially in England and Germany, was aware of this gifted man."¹⁰⁰ One more attempt by the *Times* to make up its mind brought it, the following week, to the ingenious conclusion that Tagore had written a book deliberately calculated to exploit the then prevalence in Europe of a drift towards mysticism and of a fascination with anything Oriental. Thus it looked upon the award as the result of successful opportunism on Tagore's part. It must be said to the credit of the *Times*, however, that after this initial distress it settled down to give Tagore more extended and just coverage than any other American newspaper.

In contrast to the *Times*, the New York *Evening Post* took a decisive stand more quickly, and its editorial of November 15, 1913 is a fine example of the more favourable kind of American reaction. It also noted that in recent years "the Orient has imposed itself mightily upon the imagination of the West" and that "the spirit of romanticism in European literature has found its latest phase in a mysticism, a concentration upon the inner nature of man," but saw these as factors paving the way to a closer understanding between East and West. For providing such a bridge, it commended Tagore rather than Kipling and found Tagore far more worthy of a prize granted for "idealism in literature" than Kipling whose work "does not really answer to the spirit of the founder's testament." Above all, it saw in the award, "a sharp rejoinder in the recognition by Europe of the fact that the East can contribute something more to the West than a burden for the white man to bear."

This last point, that the Nobel Foundation's extension of its patronage beyond the boundaries of Europe was a preliminary

99. "The Hindu Who Won the Nobel Prize," November 23, 1913, sec. VI, p. 4.

100. Letter to the editor, New York *Times*, December 2, 1913, p. 10.

101. Editorial, November 30, 1913, p. 684.

gesture towards greater inter-national understanding, is to be found often enough in American newspapers and periodicals to be taken as a typical reaction.¹⁰² It is perhaps an extension of the traditional American dedication to goodwill among men ; it may also be part of America's growing desire at the beginning of this century to emerge from her isolation into the international scene.

For an example of a most uncompromising stand against the award to Tagore, we can refer to an article entitled "The Ignoble Decision : Hindu Poet Unworthy of the Nobel Prize" in the Los Angeles *Times*.¹⁰³ Basing his criticism on his inability to find any merit in Tagore's poetry, this writer calls the Nobel Committee incompetent and its decision unjustified. Tagore is dismissed as a temporary fad, and his recognition is taken as a sign that modern literature continues its "debauch extending over several years." However intemperate this critic may be, it is worth noting that this appraisal concerns itself solely with literary merit—a concern that so often receded in the background in so many American appraisals of Tagore.

Whichever way America reacted to Tagore's winning the prize, there is no doubt that it was the most effective single means by which America came to know Tagore. As John Macy recalled later, "Not many years ago the tom-tom of the Nobel Prize beat before the tent of the modest and inoffensive Hindu poet,

102. To take some examples :

"The award.....is a sign of the times. The races of the earth are ever drawing closer together, growing ever more ready to recognise and acclaim service, whoever the servitor and brother, far or near."—Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, November 16, 1913.

"Somehow we cannot help but feel that the recognition which has come to Tagore is one more inspiring sign of the times—an indication of a better, broader and kindlier feeling among all the races of man."—Des Moines (Iowa) *Capital*, November 22, 1913, *HUMic*.

"The award comes at the right time. A generation ago, even a decade ago, such an award might have provoked much surprise. In these recent years we have become better acquainted with the Eastern Man."—*Outlook*, CV (November 29, 1913), 689.

"It inaugurates the dawn of a new era of friendliness between the East and the West, so long at odds on account of the age-long struggle for material supremacy and territorial aggrandizement."—*Review of Reviews*, XLIX (January 1914), 101.

103. Gordon Ray Young, in issue of November 15, 1913, *HUMic*.

Rabindranath Tagore.”¹⁰⁴ American literature had to wait until 1930 before a similar recognition was given to one of its writers. Until 1913 it must have appeared to Americans as a purely European honour but Tagore’s receipt of it seemed to have devalued the award to some extent.

104. “Tagore,” *The Critical Game* (New York, 1922), p. 123.

CHAPTER THREE

INDIAN BARD AND AMERICAN REVIEWERS

George A. Macmillan's letter to William Rothenstein accepting the then risk of publishing Tagore in English concludes by saying : "We should of course do our best to work the book in the Indian market as well as here and in America."¹ The dates of American publication of Tagore's books by Macmillan seem to bear out this policy. The books generally preceded or followed Tagore's visits to America, reaching the public roughly in the intervals between his visits. This makes it possible for us to examine Tagore's literary reception here, in terms of the reception of this books, in distinct chronological phases.

Throughout this chapter, material from magazines and newspapers have been used as the basis of American literary opinion of Tagore. Primarily, citations in the *Book Review Digest* have been pursued, supplemented by relevant references in the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*. While such a sampling by no means exhausts all the opinions that were published, it insures that the most notable and representative critical comments have been examined. Whenever possible, opinions about specific works have been preferred over general views of Tagore's work. These opinions have been brought together, rather than analyzed separately, so as to bring out the outstanding trends in criticism of Tagore as a writer.

Following, as this survey does, the chronology of Tagore's publications in English, little consideration has been given here to the sequence of his creative career in the original Bengali, but it cannot be sufficiently emphasised that the chronology of Tagore's English canon is confusingly different from that of his

1. Letter dated November 26, 1912. Original letter is among "The Papers of Sir William Rothenstein" at Harvard University.

Bengali. Occasionally, instances of the Bengali critical reaction to certain books have been cited to bring out the contrast with the American reactions to these books.

i. *Gitanjali* to Songs of Kabir

The Nobel Committee's recognition of *Gitanjali* (1913) followed its appearance in America² by about seven months, and notably affected its reception in this country. Prior to this award, the book was scarcely noted, and that too only by indirection. Thus *Literary Digest* remarked, "In England the unrimed poems of a Bengalese writer, Rabindranath Tagore, are attracting a great deal of attention,"³ while *Current Opinion* facetiously warned : "At last the 'yellow peril' assumes definite shape. England is invaded by Hindoo poets. America, it is presumed, is about to be ;"⁴ on pages immediately preceding the latter remark appeared extracts from opinions expressed by Pound and Yeats and by a London *Nation* reviewer.⁵ The most substantial review of *Gitanjali* to be published in an American periodical at this time came from abroad, written by the Englishwoman, May Sinclair. Soon thereafter, the first *Gitanjali* review of American origin as well as place of publication appeared in the *Nation* of New York.⁶

May Sinclair was present when Tagore's poems were first read to an English gathering on the occasion described by the *Nation* reviewer as "the thaumaturgic Mr. Yeats turning Mr. Rothenstein's drawing room into a holy temple."⁷ As in Yeats's introduction to *Gitanjali*, May Sinclair's article⁸ reports what appears to be her own subjective experience rather than record

2. This was the popular edition published by Macmillan, and is referred to in the letter quoted above, n. 1. An earlier limited edition was printed privately in London in October 1912.

3. "Current Poetry," XLVII (August 9, 1913), 218.

4. "Recer. Poetry," LIV (March 1913), 236. The allusion refers also to Mrs. Sarojini Naidu whose *The Bird of Time* (London, 1913) had just appeared.

5. "The Lyrical Voice of Bengal," LIV, 234-235.

6. "Romance from Bengal," XCVI (May 15, 1913), 500.

7. *Ibid.*

8. "The *Gitanjali* : or, Song offerings of Rabindra Nath Tagore," *North American Review*, CXCVII (May 1913), 659-676.

critical appreciation. She argues that these poems not merely fill a void of the Western mind caused by its deep-seated conviction that "devotional poetry is not and cannot be pure poetry :"; they are also more satisfying than poems of Christian mysticism because "nearly all Western mystics betray a restlessness about their rest...In Tagore, there is the serenity and purity of supreme possession." Earlier she had written to Tagore, "...[the poems] have made present for me forever the divine thing that I can only find by flashes and with an agonizing uncertainty....,"⁹ and this confirms that she was not the most reliable guide to Tagore's poetry. But her article was widely read in America and caused such a great demand that the *North American Review* had to arrange specially for the sale of back-numbers of this issue.¹⁰ The *Nation* reviewer¹¹ reacted sharply against these raptures—against Yeats's "ecstatic wonder and ambiguous adoration," and Miss Sinclair's "sibylline utterances...her intoxicated paragraphs"—and found *Gitanjali* "a true flower of the autumn of romance." That this was not meant as praise is made clear earlier by the reviewer when he said about the poems : "They are lauded by Mr. Yeats for the good reason that they somehow belong to the same trailing end of the romantic movement as do his [Yeats's] own sweet mysticisms. Their parentage goes back, by what channels or concealed sympathies we do not know, to the source from which came Maeterlinck's reveries and the theatre de lame."¹²

If the Nobel award unloosed a flood of critical attention upon Tagore, it also stimulated a spate of publication of his work in English. By the end of 1914, two more volumes of verse, three plays and a book of essays were on the market—as the *Nation* regarded it, Tagore "now, of Nobel prize fame, is, if the vulgar image be permitted, making hay while the sun shines."¹³ Throughout this period of Tagore's first emergence

9. Letter quoted in Krishna Kripalani, *A Biography* p. 219.

10. See announcement at the back of the *New York Times Index* for 1913.

11. XCVI, *op. cit.*

This reviewer was probably Paul Elmer More because the ideas expressed here and in succeeding reviews are identical with the views in an article published later under his name.

12. "Notes," XCVI, 500.

13. "Notes," XCVII (December 4, 1913), 541.

as a writer in English, the *Nation* remained unaffected by Tagore's sudden fame and whittled away steadily at his much-publicized literary genius. It declared *The Gardener* "pretty and gentle," *The Crescent Moon* "prettily rendered," *Sadhana* "pretty enough gush, though woefully trite."¹⁴

In direct contrast to the *Nation's* denial of Tagore was the readiness of the *New York Times* to compensate for its earlier tardiness in acknowledging the Indian poet. After including *Gitanjali* as among the hundred best books of the year for having brought successfully to the printed page "this contact with the Infinite,"¹⁵ it went on to hail *The Gardener* as "poetry stripped of the superficialities of race and personality down to the naked soul of man."¹⁶ Here, some points of resemblance with Whitman's work were noted, not in form, but in the spirit.¹⁷ The third review article to appear in this newspaper was signed Helen Bullis, and in her Tagore had not the least devoted nor the first of his many admirers among American women. She found *Sadhana* full of eminently practicable mysticism, and her praise of *The Crescent Moon* ascends unprecedented eulogical heights : "Without the dotting of an 'i', the Indian author has reminded us that the philosopher, the lover, the saint and the child are in their last analysis the same. If the idea comes to us as a surprise, it is only because we have forgotten the saying of an earlier and greater Seer—'Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven'"¹⁸ This last allusion will show how far Tagore worship had advanced from the stage where he was being compared merely to St. Francis of Assisi or Thomas a' Kempis.

As counter-balance to the professional opinions expressed above, a private observation made in the same newspaper may

14. See XCVII, 486, 541.

15. See list, November 30, 1913, 671.

This was two weeks after the Nobel Prize announcement, and about eight months after the first notice of *Gitanjali* in any American publication.

16. *Ibid.*, 712.

17. A few parallel lines are quoted here. May Sinclair had been the first to mark the resemblance : "He [Tagore] has passages that recall Walt Whitman (that robust and boisterous Vaishnavist of the Western World) without his boisterousness....."—*North American Review*, CXCVII, 675.

18. "India's Poet : Remarkable Verse by Tagore," January 25, 1914, p. 40.

be noted. A certain F. White Ruger said in a letter to the book review section that he found in Tagore's poetry "the age-old formula for the induction of a well-understood psychological-physiological condition perfectly understood by modern psychologists as one that transcends reason and makes gold of dross."¹⁹ This, in his opinion, was the characteristic of all mystical literature, and to Tagore's expression of it he gave the name "verbomania."

The two volumes of verse which followed *Gitanjali* were *The Gardener* (1913), containing what its author called "lyrics of love and life," and *The Crescent Moon* (1914), subtitled "child poems." Tagore's publisher—and perhaps he himself—may have intended to demonstrate the variety and range of the poet's work in these two volumes. From the reception awarded these books, it does not appear that such an intention bore much fruit. The *Outlook* rejoiced to find that Tagore could write love-poetry "which in the beauty of its expression invites comparison with the Song of Songs itself,"²⁰ and the *Review of Reviews* said of the so-called child-poems: "They are not childish rhymes or jingles of sound; rather they are the delicate, playful thoughts of childhood touched with the premonition of maturity."²¹ But the *Nation* said about these books that there was little to add to what it had already said about *Gitanjali*, and the well-meaning Helen Bullis, in trying to stress Tagore's consistent philosophy of life, said she found striking the lack of dissimilarity among his works.²² Neither *The Gardener* nor *The Crescent Moon* received much individual attention; overshadowed by *Gitanjali*, they only helped to reinforce the overriding impression of Tagore as an essentially religious poet, devoted to a personal and anthropomorphic God, a poet who was moved by some mystical intuition peculiarly his own though derived from Hindu theology, a poet who expressed himself strangely but effectively in English that frequently recalled the language of the Bible.

The publication of *Sadhana : the Realisation of Life* (1913) brought Tagore's American career up to date, as it were, because these philosophical discussions had been broached by Tagore

19. January 4, 1914, p. 773.

20. CVI (January 3, 1914), 43.

21. XLIX (January 1914), 117.

22. See January 25, 1914, *op. cit.*

in lectures delivered in America in 1912-13 to church organizations and university groups.²³ Upon publication, the book was almost as widely reviewed as *Gitanjali*, thus signifying the continued interest in Tagore. As literature, *Sadhana* was the first sustained demonstration of Tagore's ability to write ratiocinative prose ; but it was regarded as a philosophical tract and reviewers disagreed among themselves about the value of the book as philosophy. While the *Review of Reviews* judged that *Sadhana* came "nearest to correlating the teachings of the Upanishads and Buddha with the dynamic Western gospel of Christianity of any so-called popular book yet published,"²⁴ the *Independent* found nothing new here because this philosophy "is already familiar to students in the mysticism of Emerson, of Plato and of Christ, to name three disparate teachers..."²⁵ If *Current Opinion* hailed Tagore's Emersonian reconciliation of opposites as his "Answer to the World Riddle,"²⁶ it was precisely this "passion for reconciling Jesus and Krishna" that made the *Nation* impatient.²⁷ Only the *New York Times* found the book eminently satisfactory in its own right—"...it may be only a practical mysticism like that of Rabindranath Tagore that will help us to orientate ourselves once more..."²⁸—and considerations such as those of "practical mysticism" were subsequently to overcome merely literary consideration of Tagore's work.

The three plays which followed *Sadhana* did not substantially alter the impressions that America had formed by now about Tagore as a writer. Since none of them were enacted at the time, they were treated as dramatic literature rather than as theatre material. Steady admirers like Mary Carolyn Davies²⁹ and Alice Corbin Henderson³⁰ were prepared to overlook the difficulties of reconciling such drama to Western theatre ; a constant

23. One of these essays, "Why Pain and Evil are Indispensable," first published in the *Hibbert Journal*, was reviewed, with extended quotations, by *Current Opinion*, LV (September, 1913), 185-186.

24. XLIX (January 1914), 117.

25. LXXX (July 27, 1914), 136.

26. LVI (January 1914), 40-42.

27. XCVII, 541.

28. January 25, 1914, p. 40.

29. See article in *Forum*, LI (January 1914), 140-144.

30. See later in this chapter for her reviews.

adversary like the *Nation* reviewer mourned : "...we have a distinct feeling that each fresh volume from that fertile pen is a step downwards..."³¹ That there was some uncertainty about the precise genre of these works is evident when we find a *Bookman* reviewer include them in an article dealing with current poetry publications,³² while the intention of the author is questioned in a review-article in the *Dial* : "Not only does the printed play serve as a platform, or at least as a soap-box, for people who have a social or political message to deliver to the world ; it has been seized upon by the lyric poets as a medium for the expression of personal emotion."³³

The reception of *Chitra* (1914) provides a curious case in the comparative study of cultures. During 1912-13 in the world of Bengali letters, the original *Chitrangada* (1892) became the centre of a spirited controversy regarding morality in literature with one critic saying that the book should be burned because it advocated sexual freedom.³⁴ Now rendered into English and modified in size, the work was acclaimed in America as modern and forward-looking because it spoke on behalf of the emancipation of women.³⁵ It is not known if Tagore dressed the legendary Indian princess-huntress in English to be a model for the modern American suffragette : but two years later he was to urge American

31. "Literature," XCIX (November 12, 1914), 585.

32. William A. Bradley, "The New Poetry," XL (October 1914), 205.

33. Homer E. Woodbridge, "Plays of Today and Yesterday," LVIII (January 16, 1915), 48.

34. See *Rabindra-jibani*, II, 311 for Dwijendralal Roy's attack and A. Ohdedar, *Rabindra-sahitya samalochanar dhara*, pp. 69-72, for Priyanath Sen's defence.

35. The following examples illustrate this :

".....(a book) that might serve as evangel to the most advanced among modern Occidental women....."—*New York Times*, March 22, 1914, 129.

".....something piquant in the combination of the old Hindu metaphorical style.....with what is really a plea for the emancipation of women....."—*Nation*, XCVIII (May 21, 1914), 611.

"In spite of its exotic origin, the play has an immediate bearing on the feminist movement that at present disturbs the world."—*Current Opinion*, LVI (May 1914), 358.

36. See his "My Parting Wish for the Women of America," *Ladies Home Journal*, XXXIV (March 1917), 9. Also "Tagore's Parting Message to the Women of America," *Current Opinion*, LXII (April 1917), 268-269.

women, who conspicuously formed the bulk of his audiences, to make better use of their leisure than they did.³⁶ That reviewers could read a contemporary meaning into the play, however, indicated their willingness to accept Tagore on their own terms when possible.³⁷

The Post Office (1914)³⁸ did not encourage any further modernization of Tagore, though its original was composed only about two years before Tagore first came to America, and should have been more susceptible to contemporary influences. Perhaps because the play's central character is a young boy, it was associated with the "*Crescent Moon* side of his inspiration"³⁹ and confirmed the notion that "through all the writings of the Indian poet runs a vein of love and understanding of childhood."⁴⁰ Inaugurating its entry into Tagore-reviewing, the *Boston Evening Transcript* declared itself unmoved by *Chitra* but found in the second play, "with its central figure of a child fanciful and visionary, there is the essence of the striking symbolism and mystery that has imbued the best work that we know of the Bengali poet."⁴¹

Both symbolism and mystery on a more profound scale and of less penetrable meaning were to be had in the third and longest of these plays, *The King of the Dark Chamber* (1914). Inevitably the symbolism recalled Maeterlinck⁴² and Helen Bullis saw in the play an allegory, a "form of which Tagore is the greatest living master."⁴³ The most lavish praise of Tagore as a playwright came from Alice Corbin Henderson who, after a brief note about this play in *Poetry*,⁴⁴ wrote a long essay—the first, and for a long time the only, attempt in the West to place Tagore in the Indian dramatic tradition. This appeared in the

37. In *Rabindranath Tagore : Poet and Dramatist* (London, 1926), p. 132, Edward Thompson quotes an Englishman teaching at an Indian University who considered that the heroine Chitra had been debased by Tagore to prove that woman exists merely for the pleasure of man. When he revised this book in 1946, Thompson omitted this quotation.

38. The play was also published in *Forum*, LI (1914), 453-471.

39. W. A. Bradley in *Bookman*, XL, 205.

40. "A Child Drama," *New York Times*, July 5, 1914, p. 301.

41. July 29, 1914, p. 21.

42. To the discredit of Tagore, according to the *Nation* (see n. 31 above) ; to Tagore's favour, according to Homer Woodbridge (see n. 33 above).

43. *New York Times*, February 14, 1915, p. 20.

44. V (December 1914), 133.

Drama,⁴⁵ a magazine published by the Drama League of America, the Chicago organization which sponsored many of Tagore's lecture-meetings on his second trip here. Miss Henderson pointed out what Tagore had in common with ancient Hindu drama and how he differed from Maeterlinck ; she also tried, not very convincingly, to relate the plays to the poems published up till then. Above all, she heavily underlined the mystical element which she found pervading all the plays ; as she says in her opening sentence : "It is quite impossible at the outset to characterize three of the four plays of Rabindranath Tagore about which I am to write without using the word 'mystic,' and I shall therefore use it in its exact sense."

Writing about these plays two years later, the drama columnist of the Indianapolis *News* confessed that they became clearer in meaning on re-reading and demanded second thought.⁴⁶ Usually the obscurity of these plays, their vague symbols and their indeterminate action, were attributed to their being mystical by conception. The over-all impression that Tagore was primarily a mystic—and everything else afterwards—must only have been strengthened when he translated into English one hundred songs of Kabir, a poet mystic of fifteenth century India. In preparing the *Songs of Kabir* (1915), he was aided by Evelyn Underhill, the English writer and exponent of mysticism, who also wrote a long introduction for the volume. Much of what she said about Kabir was equally applicable to Tagore, and it led to some speculation about whether Kabir was the source, if not the master, of the later poet.⁴⁷ In the main, the "mystic" label had come to stay on Tagore, and would never really be unstuck. As a reviewer had asserted once : "Of course Tagore is a mystic. He could not be an Oriental religious teacher and not be a mystic."⁴⁸

ii. The Bolpur Edition

The almost simultaneous appearance of two Tagore biogra-

45. XIV (May 1914), 161-176. This issue also printed the complete text of *The King of the Dark Chamber*.

46. Oliver M. Sayler, October 28, 1916.

47. See Helen Bullis, "Tagore and A Mystic," *New York Times*, February 14, 1915, p. 49.

48. "Three Kinds of Ministers," *Outlook*, CVI (April 14, 1914), 817.

phies, written in English and published in America,⁴⁹ met a much desired need in this country to know more about the writer before passing final judgment on him. Frequently the two books were reviewed together, and the attention they drew may be taken as an indirect measure of the more direct interest in Tagore himself.

B. K. Roy's *Rabindranath Tagore : The Man and His Poetry* (New York, 1915) has already been discussed in an earlier section. Ernest Rhys' *Rabindranath Tagore : A Biographical Study* (New York, 1915), issued by Tagore's own publisher, is more than a biographical study because it devotes separate chapters to Tagore's poetry, his plays and his short stories, though the latter had not yet been published abroad. Only the *Nation* reviewer noticed this when he said, "One good service Mr. Rhys performs in giving us a pretty full summary, with extracts, of two or three of Tagore's prose-tales, which leads the present reviewer to suspect that those are right who value these pieces of fiction above Tagore's poetry."⁵⁰ Otherwise this reviewer finds in Rhys's admiration for Tagore confirmation of Europe's recent degradation towards emotional obscurantism in art. Louis Bredvold in the *Dial* agrees with the latter part of this diagnosis but considers Tagore as a possible remedy rather than as another symptom : "Hindu poetry should reveal to us that the lack of a core of thought accounts for the fatuity of our religious efforts, the charlatanism of our culture, the restlessness and materialism of our life."⁵¹ Both these diametrically opposed views on Tagore had been expressed before ; the only new note was struck by a Catholic periodical which discovered elements of spirituality in Tagore's writing that could very well "inspire Christians with renewed faith in the possibility, and fresh zeal to labor for the coming of the day when there shall be but one Fold."⁵² This is yet another instance of how a reviewer could read his own mind into Tagore. A little later another clergyman was to be even more positive

49. Another biography in English but not published in America, K. S. Ramaswami Sastri's *Sir Rabindranath Tagore : His Life, Personality and Genius* (Madras, India, 1916) was favourably reviewed in *Review of Reviews*, LIV (December 1916), 670-671.

50. *CI* (August 5, 1915), 182.

51. "Tagore, Poet and Mystic," LVIII (June 10, 1915), 459-461.

52. *Catholic World*, CII (October 1915), 107.

about the impact of Christianity upon Tagore—"In the growth of his spiritual life he seems to have reached the point where he has accepted about everything that is Christian,...The day will arrive when men like Tagore will accept Christianity, but it has not come yet."⁵³

For the purpose of comparison, Ajitkumar Chakrabarti's review⁵⁴ may be noted as a representative Bengali opinion of Rhys's book on Tagore. The earliest and among the most able commentators on Tagore's work,⁵⁵ Chakrabarti found the book guilty of several faults : that it was neither a connected account of the poet's life, nor a chronological survey of his works, while the emphasis on Tagore's saintliness had been achieved by omitting his militant social criticism and neglecting his political activities. In short, Chakrabarti made criticisms which would apply to much Western writing on Tagore at that time, namely, that it was based on insufficient knowledge about Tagore. However, this reviewer found refreshing the admiration and enthusiasm with which Rhys had tackled his task, and specially recommended the chapters on Tagore's short stories and on Santiniketan.

By about 1916, it is possible to distinguish some of the principal channels along which American opinion of Tagore had begun to flow. Several seminal articles on the Indian writer appeared during the year, each trying as it were to pass some ultimate verdict on his work. His poems began to reappear in anthologies.⁵⁶ At the end of the year came the first collected edition, named after the place where Tagore had established his school. Only the *New York Times* reviewed the Bolpur Edition, singling out the different volumes for fresh comment.⁵⁷ Perhaps other reviewers felt that their last word on Tagore had already been said.

Of four areas of American opinion discernible at this point,

53. George A. Neeld, "Rabindranath Tagore," *Methodist Review*, XCVIII (May-June, 1916), 426-433.

54. See *Modern Review*, (April 1917), 434-436.

55. Wrote perhaps the first critical commentary on Tagore, *Rabindranath* (Calcutta, 1912). His shorter essays on Tagore were collected in his *Kabya-parikrama* (Dacca, 1916?).

56. See *The Spirit of Man*, ed. Robert S. Bridges (New York, 1916) ; *Poems of the Great War*, ed. John W. Cunliffe (New York, 1917).

57. December 10, 1916, p. 541.

the least shared was the view that Tagore's work is a travesty of ancient Hindu religious literature. Irving Babbitt was to state this mildly when he said, "Tagore has genuinely oriental traits; but in his total outlook on life he reminds one less of the ancient sages of his race than of Shelley or even of Maeterlinck. In short, he must be judged primarily as a romantic poet....."⁵⁸ But Paul Elmer More took up the classical cudgel against Tagore with grim resolution, and expounded this view anonymously but vigorously in every book review, reaching a climax in a signed article in which he sought to prove his case once and for all.⁵⁹ More's grievance against Tagore is succinctly stated early in this essay : "Whatever Tagore may be, and whencesoever he draws his inspiration, he is in essence everything that India, philosophically and religiously, was not." Then he takes five extracts from *Gitanjali* and *Fruit-Gathering*, and places them beside passages from the Bhagavad-Gita to prove that the former represent a "dreaming dissolution into Nature," a "surrender to the charm of illusion," and "effeminate feeling of defeat"—all of which are a betrayal of the austere vision and sturdy virility of the older poem. More deemed it particularly heinous that Tagore should propagate such soft sentiments at a time of war, and felt that "a protest is due against taking this effeminate Romanticist with solemn seriousness as the bearer of a religious message in these deeply troubled times." As a classical scholar with knowledge of Sanskrit, More spoke no doubt with learned authority, but when he compares Tagore's poems of subjective devotion to a metaphysical tract like the Gita, his good faith may be questioned. Later in the essay More sounds his familiar diatribe against a "reprobated wave of neo-Romanticism" in Europe, and we realise that More's maltreatment of Tagore is part of a larger disapprobation.

The essay, incidentally, roused three protests—the first from another famous Indian, Lajpat Rai, who proposed in a letter

58. "Romanticism and the Orient," in *On Being Creative and Other Essays* (Boston, 1932), p. 251.

59. "Rabindranath Tagore," *Nation*, CIII (November 30, 1916), 506-507. Reproduced in summary with quotations in *Current Opinion*, LXII (February 1917), 115-116.

For earlier instances of More's attitude. see *Nation*, XCVI, 500 ; XCVII, 541 ; XCIX, 585 ; C, 688 ; CI, 182.

to the *Nation* that More's condemnation of Tagore's philosophy on the basis of a few lines of verse was unjust, and his denigration of Tagore as poet on account of a "soft" philosophy was irrelevant.⁶⁰ The second was from a personal friend of Tagore's, Mrs. Mayce Seymour, who referred to Tagore's practical achievements to refute the charge that he was merely a mystic dreamer.⁶¹ The third came from the least partisan source when William Chislett wrote from Los Angeles that More's hostility was the result of critical preconceptions which placed conduct above art as well as the outcome of More's pet aversion to any form of romanticism. Chislett went on to assert that Tagore may not be a profound philosopher nor a great poet, but "he has qualities as a man and writer that are an inspiration to his own country and to ours."⁶²

A second school of thought found Tagore most noteworthy in his endeavour to blend the Orient and the Occident. This was the most friendly American view of Tagore and stands him in good stead even today. Hamilton Mabie drew attention to this achievement in his introduction to B. K. Roys's biography, and for this reason saw in Tagore "a very important figure in the coming together of the East and West which promises to be the most dramatic and perhaps the most important event of the century."⁶³ Some saw Tagore searching a common meeting ground in religious belief. Thus W. S. Rusk speculated : "Tempering Hindu monism with Christian individualism and Hindu asceticism with Christian belief in action, Tagore may well lead a religious revival, the like of which has not been seen for twenty centuries."⁶⁴ Then there were those who saw Tagore overcoming mutual barriers between East and West by virtue of some transcendental vision. "One hesitates in classifying Tagore among the mystics," said an editorial in New York

60. CIV (January 4, 1917), 14-15.

More added this note to the end of his published letter : "Sir Rabin-dranath Tagore has given a formal exposition of his philosophy in *Sadhana* : The Realization of Life. Despite its constant quotation of ancient texts, it seems to me, no less than his poems, a saccharine imitation."

61. Letter to the editor, *Dial*, LXII (February 22, 1917), 130-131.

62. "More on Tagore," *Moderns and Near Moderns* (New York, 1928), pp. 216-219.

63. *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

64. *Sewanee Review*, XXIV (January 1916), 122.

Times, preferring to call Tagore's vision "this intense optimism, this joy in life and death pervading all his work."⁶⁵ And if Tagore had to be deemed a mystic, Lyman Abbott's apt epigram with regard to this may have represented a widely shared view : "I am enough of a mystic to prefer the experience of God to the definition of God."⁶⁶

For an Indian opinion on Tagore as bridge-builder between East and West, we have Lajpat Rai writing at this time in an American periodical ⁶⁷ that what appeals to the modern Indian reader is not Tagore's mysticism. This mysticism may be a revelation to the West, when expressed in an occidental language ; but it is of no special wonder to the Indian to whom mysticism is a native element. Instead, suggests Rai, it is Tagore's capacity "to speak to us of things which we have learnt to associate with the occident, in oriental garb, which appeals to us.....He professes to show us the way to absorb what is best in the new world without losing what is valuable and priceless in the old." The problem of judicious assimilation concerned all of Asia, and Tagore had given it eloquent expression.

The third—and to Tagore's literary reputation the most baleful—American notion was that Tagore had a message for the Western world. Articles with such titles as Montrose J. J. Moses' "The Poet of India and his Message"⁶⁸ or Paul Morris' "Tagore and India's Message"⁶⁹ seemed to take a sermon in every Tagore book for granted. It is never specified which particular work sought to instruct, but in reviewing the whole body of Tagore's publication in English till then it was said, "At a time when man and man, nation and nation, ideal and ideal is so tragically divided he comes forward to tell us that not in power but in comprehension is the fulfilment of man's existence."⁷⁰

Perhaps it was the sheer contrast between Tagore's tranquil tone and the troubled times that made people ascribe some super-

65. March 6, 1916, sec. 7, p. 1.

66. "A Voice from the East," *Outlook*, CXIV (December 13, 1916), 797.

67. "The Dilemma of Asia," *Independent*, LXXXVIII (October 2, 1916), 16-17.

68. *Munsey's Magazine*, December 1, 1916.

69. *Forum*, LXI (December 1916), 693-704.

70. *New York Times*, December 10, 1916, p. 541

ior vision to him, his very remoteness from the agony of 1916 that made people wonder whether Tagore might have found a solution that left him unscathed. Whatever may be the reason, the consequence was that those who went to Tagore for instruction or solace, denied themselves the possibility of aesthetic satisfaction. This may be inferred from the tendency to treat *Sadhana*, a philosophical work, as more valuable than Tagore's literary creation except where the latter seemed to embody that philosophy.

A fourth general reaction was to look upon Tagore's success as a literary fad, hence necessarily temporary. Paul Elmer More had been quite convinced of this ; Joyce Kilmer ground a similar axe with which he attacked what he termed the "Tagore craze."⁷¹ Again it was an Indian writing in an American magazine who expressed the "fear that what appears to be the natural splendor radiating from a lustrous gem of the Indian deep, may, after the excitement of the passing hour has spent itself, prove to be but the illusive effect of some handy optical stage device, impressed into service at the impatient call of the goading desire of the West for something fresh and quaint in the way of stimulus."⁷² By this time, of course, Tagore had come and gone on his famous second tour of the United States, during which the more obviously temporary effects of his reception in America became self-evident. Most of these effects operated outside the literary context and have been discussed in their proper place.

iii. Hungry Stones to My Reminiscences

The next phase of Tagore's "American" literary career may be said to cover the years 1916 to 1918. It includes his second and best known visit to America, and, perhaps as a corollary, it saw the publication of as many as ten new books of Tagore—two each of poetry, drama, short stories and essays, rounded off with an autobiographical volume.⁷³ A decline—or at least no

71. "Rabindranath Tagore," *America*, XIII (July 17, 1915), 355.

72. Kshitish Chandra Neogy, "Rabindranath Tagore : the Poet Laureate of India," *Open Court*, XXXI (March 1917), 185-187.

73. The tenth book, *Stray Birds* (1916) has not been considered here. Its literary status is ambiguous and it received very little attention.

The ten-volume Bolpur edition, already cited (see above), was.

increase—of interest in Tagore as poet and playwright is noticeable, though this was compensated for the time being, by attention to his emergence as a story-teller and controversialist.

The *Book Review Digest* for 1916 cites only two reviews for Tagore's next collection of poems, *The Fruit-Gathering* (1916). To American readers, by now familiar with Tagore's characteristic verse-line and poetic content, these poems could not have appeared to be markedly different from his earlier verse. Thus the Boston *Transcript* reviewer asserted that these poems were a maturation of what *Gitanjali* had promised, but in doing so he applies himself more to the earlier volume than the present one.⁷⁴ Nor does the Springfield *Republican* reviewer succeed in concentrating upon the latest volume ; inevitably he turns to discussing Tagore's poetry as a whole, and—rare among American reviewers—he has something to say about Tagore's metrical form.⁷⁵ The poems of *Lovers's Gift and Crossing* (1918) attracted more reviews numerically, but most were in the nature of brief notices. The *Nation* continued its vendetta through a new critic, O. W. Firkins, who said : "The rhymeless and meterless but not rhythmless lines have the length, the slenderness, the hollowness and the dusky varnish of reeds, and, like reeds, their property is to whisper."⁷⁶ Even the New York *Times*, for so long a staunch supporter of Tagore, had only thirty words to say on an inside page about this volume : "Rabindranath Tagore was very interesting once. His books are all alike. However much the fisher folk and the market men of India may chant his lays at their daily task, they are not singable in English. In fact this volume impresses one as being material for poetry rather than poetry itself."⁷⁷ When Tagore's publishers resorted to a combined re-issue, *Gitanjali and Fruit-Gathering* (1918), with the additional embellishment of illustrations, it as really an adverse reflection on Tagore's fame as a poet. Two of his earliest enthusiasts, however, remained constant. In their jointly edited anthology, Harriet Monroe and Alice

published towards the end of 1916. It included only two publications of the period under review in this section, the rest being re-issues of earlier books.

74. November 11, 1916, sec. iii, p. 7.

75. December 24, 1916, supp. 13.

76. CVIII (February 1, 1919), 169.

77. XXIII (August 25, 1918), 362.

Corbin Henderson included as many as fifteen pieces by Tagore.⁷⁸

The plays of the period had a curious reception. The later volume, *Sacrifice and Other Plays* (1917), containing some of Tagore's most successful dramatic writing and painstakingly adapted by him for English rendering, went practically unnoticed. Its predecessor, *The Cycle of Spring* (1917), a single, long play which retains very little of its original flavour in translation, was extensively reviewed and occasionally lavishly praised. At least three reviewers⁷⁹ found themselves charmed by the youthful gaiety of the piece, and unhesitatingly recommended its simplicity to those who had found Tagore's earlier dramatic efforts difficult to interpret. Other writers were less easy to captivate ; Clement Wood relegated it to the delectation of "countless Hermiones who would perish without their precious products of his [Tagore's] superfluent pen,"⁸⁰ while O. W. Firkins thought it was "sure to delight those estimable and trying persons for whom delight is principle and a vocation."⁸¹ That opinions did conflict was, however, in itself a healthy sign ; it meant that the play was not simply ignored like the books of poetry were.

The publication of *The Hungry Stones and Other Stories* (1916) brought about a genuine revival of American interest in Tagore, if one is to judge by the number of reviews which followed close upon each other. It was almost as if the lingering admirers of Tagore were given a fresh pretext to vindicate their taste, and the variety of responses to Tagore's story-telling suggests that critical attention had returned to his work as an artist. The *New York Times* led the hosannahs by re-application of the term "practical mystic," which had first appeared on its pages, to Tagore because he revealed himself in these stories as "an idealist finding the meaning of Man's spiritual life in union with the oneness of the universe."⁸² The *Springfield Republican* reviewer found the mysticism made more comprehensible by its being

78. *New Poetry* (1917), pp. 327-334.

79. See *New York Times*, March 11, 1917, pp. 87-88; *Springfield Republican*, June 3, 1917, supp. p. 17; *Catholic World*, CVI (November 1917), 247.

80. *New York Call*, April 29, 1917, p. 14.

81. *Nation*, CV (August 16, 1917), 176.

82. November 5, 1916, p. 465.

conveyed "in the familiar, peculiarly American vehicle—the short story."⁸³ Other reviewers⁸⁴ were less ready to grant that Tagore had really used the short story convention as recognised in America, but most of them agreed that in this form Tagore communicated his understanding of life to the Western reader far more effectively than in any other form. As Edward A. Hale summed it up, "But it is not the eastern manners, and customs, the oriental figures of speech and modes of expression, the Indian places and people, the matters of costume and usage that make the deep effect of the book.....The holding power of this book lies in its sense of truth and of life."⁸⁵

The second collection, *Mashi and Other Stories* (1918), was just as warmly received, to the extent of Edward J. O'Brien suggesting, "Sir Rabindranath Tagore's literary method is a strange one to us, but it might well be the beginning of a new short story tradition in which an American writer found inspiration as fresh as the new impulse that the discovery of Japanese print brought to Whistler and others that followed him."⁸⁶ The *Independent* noted how different was the picture of India as presented here from that painted by Kipling, because this dealt intimately with the personal lives of Indian men and women.⁸⁷ Finding these tales "in no wise imitative of American short story" a reviewer of the *Bellman* saw them as nearer to the Russian or French stories.⁸⁸ So encouraging was the reception that a third volume, *Stories from Tagore* (1918),⁸⁹ was published in America, though its preface claimed that this publication was intended to be an English text book for Indian students.

Neither the metaphysics of *Personality* (1917) nor the political philosophy of *Nationalism* (1917) is strictly relevant to Tagore's literary reputation, except when the prose-style of

83. November 25, 1916, p. 7.

84. See *Boston Transcript*, November 22, 1916, section iii, p. 5 ; *Brooklyn Eagle*, December 2, 1916 ; *North American Review*, CCV (January 1917), 149-150.

85. "Recent Fiction," *Dial*, LVI (November 30, 1916), 468.

86. "Some Books of Short Stories," *Bookman*, XLVII (May 1918), 301.

87. XCV (July 13, 1918), 66.

88. "Tagore in the Short Story," XXV (July 13, 1918), 49.

89. Contained two new stories, and the rest were selected from his two previous collections.

these books received special attention.⁹⁰ Because the ideas contained here had been only so recently expressed by Tagore in his lectures in America, these volumes possessed a sense of topicality nearly all the other publications lacked. But even when their criticism of Western values was accepted as justifiable, the reasoning was found inconsistent or set aside as more mysticism. "Tagore is abler in indicting the wrongs of society than in prescribing any well-defined remedy" can be taken as a general consensus of opinion, "better in awakening in his reader spiritual aspirations than in pointing out any practical method for their realization."⁹¹

Tagore broke new ground again with *My Reminiscences* (1917) which, though not a regular autobiography, provided much interesting background material for his own emergence as a writer. Originally composed just prior to his first real encounter with the West, in 1912, it should have been an account of the first fifty years of his life, but it is in effect a search amid memories of his boyhood and early youth, to find and explain experiences that determined his subsequent career. A pre-view was given by the *Review of Reviews*⁹² when it published excerpts from instalments that had begun to appear in the *Modern Review* of Calcutta. When it was published in book form the *Nation* complained "Sir Rabindranath Tagore's books continue to fall like the leaves of Vallombrosa,"⁹³ but the *Independent* was to recommend it as a "spiritual autobiography that will attract even those who have not had the courage to undertake the reading of Tagore's mystical poetry."⁹⁴ Whether as necessary background of Tagore's work, or as some explanation of the working of

90. Thus M. C. Otto : "But as long as Tagore writes such vital colorful English as he does in places..... he will be read, whatever faults he may be guilty of....."—"The Darkness of Mystical Light," *Dial*, LXIII (September 1917), 270.

Or Ellsworth Huntington : "Tagore's book charms by its inimitable style, but if its ideas were couched in ordinary English, they would pass unnoticed. It is wonderful that a man who at times uses English which is ungrammatical can hold the reader's attention so steadily....."—*Yale Review*, VIII (March 1919), 444.

91. *Outlook*, CXVII (February 6, 1918), 222.

92. "The Boyhood of a Hindu Poet," CIII (May 1916), 619-20.

93. "Notes," CIV (May 31, 1917), 662.

94. "New Books for Autumn Reading," XCII (October 6, 1917), 56.

his mind, or merely as a fresh instance of the quality of his prose, this book seemed to have displaced both *Gitanjali* and *Sadhana* as "the most surely rewarding of Tagore's books."⁹⁵

When the reminiscences appeared in the original *Jibansmriti* (Silaidaha, India, 1912), a Bengali critic ridiculed the work as "leafy composition," meaning thereby that the work was as haphazard as leaves growing on a tree, and said mockingly, "We cannot but admire the poet's sharpness of memory when we read how meticulously he is able to describe details of something which happened to him when he was eight years old."⁹⁶ Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay tells us⁹⁷ that Tagore was often requested afterwards to bring this autobiography up to date. He never did, and we have to turn to his letters and journals⁹⁸ for autobiographical accounts of various phases of his life.⁹⁹

iv. The Home and the World to Glimpses of Bengal.

Tagore came to America for the third time in the fall of 1921 and six more books by him appeared in the American market, marking the next extension of his literary career in English.¹⁰⁰ The first of these books was published a little before this period, and it occasioned another resurgence of interest not unlike the one that had followed the first publication of his short stories.

This book was the novel, *The Home and the World* (1919), which, in theme as well as in time of composition, was more contemporary than any of his previous translations. For the *Times* reviewer, the Indian political and social problems tackled here were equally applicable to England and America of the time, and he believed that Tagore had written the novel "with

95. *North American Review*, CCVI (July 1917), 130.

96. Translated from quotation in Aditya Ohdedar, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

97. *Rabindrasahebani*, II, 266.

98. For example, *Letters to a Friend* or *The Diary of a Westward Voyage*.

99. A late work, *My Boyhood Days* (Calcutta, 1940), returns to the early chapters of *My Reminiscences*.

100. Of these six books, *Thought Relics* (1921) has not been considered here because, like *Stray Birds* (see above, n 73), it is of indeterminate literary genre, more resembling a book of meditations than anything else.

an eye mainly, if not exclusively, upon the West."¹⁰¹ Such belief has little basis, because the themes were acute realities in India then, irrespective of what they were elsewhere. However, this reviewer was convinced by the novel's characterization as well, and concluded that it "is a very modern, not to say up-to-the-minute tale. Its characters are all here in New York, and in London, and in Chicago and in Medicine Hat, as well as in India." As a contrast in reactions, it may be noted that when this novel appeared in the original as *Ghare-baire* (Allahabad, India, 1916), this very modern-ness made it a centre of controversy in Bengal among readers who felt that it was "un-Indian."¹⁰²

The English version of the novel was generally well received in America. Even the *Nation* has, for the first time since it began reviewing Tagore, a good word for him, calling this "a profoundly wise and beautiful book" and admiring its all-round achievement: "Not only can Tagore build a novel, he can build it on an original plan; he can project character; he can reason not only lyrically but dramatically."¹⁰³ If not the wisdom, at least the clarity impressed H. W. Boynton who judged that the novel "is of simpler and firmer texture than anything with the Tagore label this far composed or conveyed in English."¹⁰⁴ The Boston *Evening Transcript* reviewer confessed that he was distracted by the picture of Indian home life, but commended the multiple-narrator technique because it aided the understanding of each character's psychology.¹⁰⁵

The new-found interest in Tagore as a novelist was manifested again when another novel appeared in English two years later, *The Wreck* (1921). Louise Mansell Field wrote for it the longest American review of any work by Tagore (2,350 words), in which the story was recapitulated with the help of several quotations to prove the point that except "in an occasional descriptive passage or in the meditations of one or two

101. "Latest Fiction by Tagore," June 8, 1919, p. 313.

With this review, Tagore returned once more to the front page of the book-review section.

102. See *Rabindra-jibani*, II, 445, and Aditya Ohdedar, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-136.

103. "New Worlds and Old," CIX (August 2, 1919), 153.

104. *The Review*, I (November 22, 1919), 602.

105. July 9, 1919, p. 6.

of the characters. there are comparatively few traces of Tagore the poet to be found in this very complicated story..... there is little in the tale which can fail to be intelligible to the ordinary Western reader....."¹⁰⁶—a point by which the reviewer clearly hoped to reassure those who had turned away from Tagore's verse. Robert Morss Lovett worked up a thesis that the novel may have become the characteristic occidental literary form, since it approximated most closely to the substance of western civilization, but "the novel became adapted to this service in the West through long evolution, and the form of fiction which developed into the western novel had its origin in the Orient ;" from which point he goes on to consider Tagore's work as illustrating various stages of this evolution.¹⁰⁷ If Lovett looked backwards, Lewis Mumford looked ahead to speculate on India's novelistic future, because, from "the material evidence one gathers in *The Wreck* it would seem that we may look for a literature as exhaustive and as powerful as *The Brothers Karamazov*."¹⁰⁸ But of the actual achievement of *The Wreck* he expressed a rather low opinion, and there were other reviewers who complained that the complexities of Hindu character and behaviour left them too puzzled to value the work highly. A typical example of this latter reaction is that of the Springfield *Republican* reviewer who exclaims, "Of course, no one would expect the women characters to have a psychology that any human (Western) being could understand or follow, but the men, too !"¹⁰⁹ The fact remains, however, that Tagore as a novelist seemed to have retrieved much of the ground he had lost steadily in America over the last decade as poet.

The decline of Tagore's reputation as poet is brought out even more baldly by the slight and hostile reception accorded to the poems of *The Fugitive* (1921). A particularly indignant article by Fillmore Hyde accused Tagore of countless crimes against metaphor and offences against literary form, saw him eternally pursuing the Eternal Fugitive, and being fascinated by the hope-

106. "Tagore. English Novelist of Hindusthan," *New York Times*, June 26, 1921, p. 16.

107. "A Throwback in Fiction," *New Republic*, XXVII (July 26, 1921), 225.

108. *Freeman*. IV (September 28, 1921), 67.

109. "A Hindoo Romance by the Poet Tagore," July 17, 1921, p. 7a.

lessness of the pursuit, and wryly concluded that "could we do what is perhaps impossible, could we overlook his transgressions, we might suspect that Tagore in some way unfamiliar to us, is a great man."¹¹⁰ About this time a selection of the English work of the Japanese poet Yone Noguchi was published, and a natural comparison between the two Eastern poets instituted by Richard Le Gallienne finds him declaring that Tagore "is not so essentially a poet as Mr. Noguchi.....his gifts are rather those of the poetic moralist and fabulist."¹¹¹ Earlier this year during his visit, Tagore told an interviewer, with reference to the method of his Bengali composition, "Sometimes I make a melody first and then put words with it. Sometimes the music is subordinated to the words. Sometimes the word is subordinated to music."¹¹² Such an explanation—perhaps the only one he ever uttered in this country—in no way helped anyone to understand his English verse.

Those who had come to prefer Tagore's prose to his verse, as well as those who looked for a picture of India in his writing, had more reason to be happy with *Glimpses of Bengal* (1921). This was a selection from his personal letters, and thus no calculated attitude *vis-a-vis* the West could be attributed to them, nor could they be charged with manifesting any particular philosophy, mystical or otherwise. Also, for the American reader it opened up an entirely new area of Tagore's writings.¹¹³ Perhaps this newness alone was responsible for revived admiration, even though the letters themselves were more than twenty years old. Lewis Mumford, who reviewed this book together with *The Wreck*, preferred this rather than the novel, because here

110. *Literary Review*, December 10, 1921, p. 255.

111. "Two Wise Men from the East," *New York Times*, December 11, 1921, p. 3.

112. "Rabindranath Tagore gives an interview on Indian Poetry to Margaret Wilkinson," *Touchstone*, VIII (February 1921), 380-382.

113. Strictly speaking, a sample of Tagore's letter-writing had already been presented in a twenty-one page pamphlet entitled *Letters* (1917), but this was so poorly distributed that no one seemed to have noticed it. The letters are numbered 68 to 80, the dates are from February to May 1893. But there is no explanation anywhere about the nature or purpose of the selection, nor even any mention of the person or persons to whom they were written. One copy of this rare publication is in the Library of Congress collection.

he found "the landscape, the characters, and the experiences are Indian, but the accent is universal."¹¹⁴ Robert E. Hume praised the book because he thought that Tagore asked the right kind of questions here and that what Tagore criticised in his own Bengal was true of the rest of India.¹¹⁵ This note of self-searching on Tagore's part seemed to be so novel to Allen Wilson Porterhead that he theorized that the younger Tagore was a different and an altogether better man ; he says about one particular letter, in which Tagore upbraids his countrymen for lack of initiative, "This is Western : but it was written twenty-seven years ago."¹¹⁶ This was perhaps the first time any Westerner found Tagore extolling what he considered a "Western" concept, so this was unusual praise indeed.

When in the essays of *Creative Unity* (1921) Tagore returned to his permanent concern, comparing life and thought of "the East" and "the West", his critics reverted to their no less consistent complaint, namely that Tagore extolled "the East" with as little validity as he reviled "the West". The *Boston Evening Transcript* grants "Certainly he well sets forth his case..... And agree or disagree, there is fine insight and keen writing in the two essays 'The Poet's Religion' and 'The Creative Ideal', "¹¹⁷ while Russel Gore of the *Detroit News* warns, "Beauty of language should deceive no one as to the revolutionary content But it is all said so musically that many a reader is bound to pass it by as a poet's book of essays."¹¹⁸ But critics less susceptible to Tagore's prose did not find anything new in his latest polemics and a representative view would be the one expressed in the *Literary Review* about this particular volume : "It shows that the present age, particularly in the West, is one of organized selfishness, ruthless plunder, and unscrupulous materialism..... It is a familiar thesis, and one that Tagore has defended so frequently that the Swedes awarded him the Nobel Prize."¹¹⁹

With this we come to the end of the continuous course of

114. *Freeman*, IV (September 28, 1921), 68.

115. *Yale Review*, XI (January 1922), 414-15.

116. "The Two Tagores," *Literary Review*, July 2, 1921, p. 8.

117. May 6, 1922, p. 6.

118. June 4, 1922, p. 8.

119. June 10, 1922, p. 728.

what has been earlier termed Tagore's "American" literary career. A compilation of the first American bibliography of Tagore's works and articles on Tagore marks this terminal point.¹²⁰ The phase just reviewed was undoubtedly given body by his recent visit to the country. He was to come again and more books were to be published. But hereafter his publications were less frequent, and it is not possible to group and classify reactions in order to obtain an index of literary opinion as it been up till now.

v. *Gora* to Collected Poems and Plays.

Esteem for Tagore's work in America of the early twenties was at such low ebb that his most ambitious novel *Gora* (1925), and one of his most important plays, *Red Oleanders* (1926), were published only to pass into oblivion as far as reviewers were concerned. This neglect may be connected with the comparative failure of Tagore's last visit to the country, or it may be the result of a feeling that the Tagore-repertoire by now must have been exhausted. When *Broken Ties and Other Stories* (1926)¹²¹ appeared, the *Saturday Review of Literature* made light of it as just one more title added to the Tagore bibliography,¹²² while the *New York Times* raised the old issue, that it was "very difficult for the Occidental mind to so divest itself of Occidental prejudices and pre-suppositions that what is Oriental may be seen in its true light. Yet this divestment must be made before approaching these stories by Tagore."¹²³ In fact this reviewer touched on an even more fundamental issue when he suggested that these stories should not be "discussed in terms of Occidental criticism," implying that the canons of basically European literary criticism could not apply all over the world.

By far the most significant result of this publication was when an American reviewer at last stated what had badly needed to

120. Ethel M. Kitch, in *Bulletin of Bibliographies*, II (May 1921), 80-84.

121. The volume was published a few months earlier from London and the Manchester *Guardian* review of the book was reproduced in *Living Age*, CCCXXVIII, (January 30, 1926), 260-261.

122. III (December 4, 1926), 398.

123. October 10, 1926, p. 11.

be said, and had somehow not been said for so long, namely that "Tagore is not a philosopher, not a theologian, he is a poet. He does not have systemized thought, but convictions, moods, and he gives them figurative expression through the various mediums of poetry, drama, novel, story, essay, lecture, letter."¹²⁴ This was W. Norman Brown, writing in the book review section of the New York *Herald Tribune*, and he must have been the first American reviewer to have the necessary acquaintance with Indian history and culture to view Tagore not with Western eyes alone—a view that would, in his words, relieve Tagore's readers in the West "of much mental searching and self-mistrust."

Norman Brown's point of view is more extensively presented in his review¹²⁵ of Edward Thompson's critical work on Tagore—the first scholarly estimate to be done in the West, yet practically unknown to America. This indifference is all the more noticeable when compared to the attention given ten years ago to the books on Tagore by Ernest Rhys and B. K. Roy. Brown summarises the course of Tagore's literary reputation thus : "There has been a great slump in Tagore's stock in the West since he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913. Heralded then as the poet of the age, he has since come to be spoken of as a mere purveyor of platitudes or even a charlatan. That the second judgment is unwarranted is as true as that the first was based upon inadequate appraisal." An adequate appraisal, in his opinion, would have to treat Tagore as a Bengali poet and judge him on his Bengali productions—an approach which had been recommended by Ezra Pound long before—and it is for having done so that Brown recommends Edward Thompson's book as a necessary adjunct to any serious reading of Tagore. Above all, Thompson's book might lead to a righting of the most serious imbalance in America's reading of Tagore : "The differentiation between what is 'mystical' in his work and what is not is needed, especially in America, where everything the poet has said is assumed to be symbolical instead of the small portion that actually is."

It is relevant to record here that Tagore himself was thorou-

124, "The Way of the Poet," *Books*, November 21, 1926, p. 20.

125. See "Tagore as Bengali Poet," *Books*, May 1, 1927, p. 14.

ghly displeased with Thompson's book, and he states this displeasure in no uncertain terms in an unpublished letter to William Rothenstein, where he begins by questioning Thompson's knowledge of the Bengali language.¹²⁶ The then editor of *Modern Review* and a close friend of Tagore's, Ramananda Chatterjee, went so far as to wonder how the London University could accept Thompson's work as a doctoral dissertation or even allowed him to teach Bengali there.¹²⁷ Another article in the same periodical made a close reading of the text of Thompson's translation *The Curse at Farewell* (London, 1924), from Tagore's *Viday-abhisap* (1894), and pointed out a number of errors betraying Thompson's limited knowledge of Bengali.¹²⁸ If Thompson was aware of all this, he does not mention it, either in his letter to Rothenstein regarding the book¹²⁹ or in the preface^e to its revised edition which was published in 1948.¹³⁰

Indian critics have been more kind to Thompson since then. Buddhadeva Bose called him "so far the only reliable European writer on Bengali literature."¹³¹ In revising a re-issue of Thompson's earlier book on Tagore, Kalidas Nag says about Thompson that "he made himself famous by his two brilliant though inadequate studies of Tagore's genius."¹³² And Sisirkumar Ghose, in speaking of books on Tagore in English, remarks : "Thompson's two books are at once the best and the worst specimens of their kind."¹³³ As criticism, the book suffers from several lapses in critical judgment in the evaluation of Tagore's poetry ; as scholarly work, all too frequently it refers to personal conversations with Tagore as authority. Nevertheless, as strongly advocated by Norman Brown, Thompson's work on Tagore is unique as the first serious attempt in the West to study Tagore.

126. Letter dated April 20, 1927, *Papers WR*, no. 101.

127. See "Mr. Thompson on Rabindranath Tagore", *Modern Review* (July 1927), 99-102.

128. See "Mr. Edward Thompson and Rabindranath Tagore", *Modern Review* (January 1928), 13-16.

129. Quoted in *Since Fifty*, pp. 44-46.

130. The preface in the revised edition is dated March 1946. Thompson died in April that year, without seeing final proofs of the book.

131. *An Acre of Green Grass* (Calcutta, 1948), p. 8.

132. *Rabindranath Tagore : His Life and Work* (revised ed., Calcutta, 1961) p. 93.

133. *The Later Poems of Tagore* (Bombay, 1961), p. 227, n. 18.

Incidentally, Thompson's primary experience of India and personal acquaintance with Tagore was largely between 1910 and 1922 ; thereafter he taught Bengali at London, English at Vassar College, and History at Oxford.

Norman Brown's evaluation of Tagore came too late to bring about any general reappraisal of Tagore's work in America, but it at least indicated that if viewed in the right perspective Tagore's work might have had a different reception. Some new appraisals were being made, but only by individuals. Thus Arthur Todd, after visiting India where he met Tagore in the poet's own surroundings, was able to place him against a much larger background—"the poet turned schoolmaster, aesthete but practical economist, recreates language, religion and art....."¹³⁴ When the eighteen-volume *Columbia University Courses in Literature* was first published in 1928, the first volume contained two extracts from Tagore. In introducing him, Brooks Henderson wrote, "The emphasis on joy seems to be his [Tagore's] peculiar contribution," and briefly discussed each volume of poetry as different modes of approaching the same goal of "realization" professed by Tagore.¹³⁵ Another essay of this time, examining Tagore's doctrine as expressed in his philosophical writing, offers this word of caution : "In all of his works, the student must be on guard if he would penetrate his thought. The charm of Tagore's utterance and his felicitous use of figures of speech provide pitfalls for the unwary."¹³⁶

Of the remaining publications, *Fireflies* (1928) was justly ignored—like *Stray Birds* and *Thought Relics* before—for the collector's item that it was. *Letters to A Friend* (1928), on the other hand, deserved but did not receive attention, although the portion devoted to Tagore's letters from America was of particular relevance in locating Tagore on the American scene, while the two introductory essays by C. F. Andrews (to whom the letters were written) were invaluable to the non-Indian reader in helping to place Tagore in his Indian literary background. When Tagore's Oxford lectures in 1930 were published as *The*

134. *Three Wise Men of the East and Other Lectures* (Minneapolis, 1927), p. 47.

135. pp. 485-488.

136. Percy Thoma Fenn, Jr., "An Indian Poet Looks at the West," *International Journal of Ethics*, XXXIX (April, 1929), 313-323.

Religion of Man (1931), several American denominational magazines discussed the volume with the seriousness the subject warranted,¹³⁷ and with none of the hostility with which Tagore's earlier expositions of Indian religious thought had been received. A professor of the Auburn Theological Seminary summed up the whole effect thus : "It is all very much as if Yajnavalkya had been reincarnated after twenty-five hundred years, educated in England, read Bergson and Eddington, acquired a singing mastery of English, won international recognition as a poet, been awarded the Nobel Prize.....asked to deliver the Hibbert Lectures for 1930—and yet remained in all essence of his mind and spirit Yajnavalkya."¹³⁸

With the appearance of *Sheaves* (1932), a selection of songs and poems translated by Nagendranath Gupta, and *The Golden Boat* (1932), a selection of poems and tales translated by Bhabani Bhattacharya, Tagore's career abroad as poet was nearly over.¹³⁹ Bhattacharya's translations were in plain prose, more plain than Tagore's own, but Gupta attempted to reproduce the original stanza forms in his translations. This was a new development in translating Tagore's poetry, and it may have been the main reason why *Sheaves* attracted attention while *The Golden Boat* did not. There was, however, no new enthusiasm for Tagore. William Rose Benet confessed, "I seem to be constitutionally incapable of truly appreciating the poetry of the famous Bengali poet."¹⁴⁰ In a long review for the *New York Times*, Eda Lou Walton tried to prove that Tagore's poetry was a kind of romanticism to which the Westerner occasionally turned as to a needed drug.¹⁴¹ Raymond Larsson felt that such poetry was rooted in a belief and culture so alien to the West that "there obviously can be no essential understanding of it."¹⁴² Many of these writers took issue with the extravagant claims made in Gupta's introductory essay, with Babette Deutsch pointing out

137. See *Christian Century*, XLVIII (July 1, 1931), 871-872 ; *Crozer Quarterly*, VIII (July 1931), 419-420 ; *Journal of Religion*, XI, (July 1931), 465-466 ; *Living Church*, LXXXV (September 5, 1931), 635.

138. Gaius Glen Atkins, *Christian Century*, *ibid.*

139. *Poems* (Calcutta, 1942), published one year after his death, contain Tagore's other translations from his own poetry.

140. *Saturday Review of Literature*, VIII (February 20, 1932), 541.

141. *New York Times*, April 24, 1932, p. 11.

142. *Commonweal*, XVI (September 28, 1932), 514-515.

the perils of such encomium—".....the rhapsodic eulogising of the Bengali poet-patriot that continues throughout the biographical introduction rather weakens than strengthens his case to the reader who chooses to consider Rabindranath solely and impartially on the basis of his poems."¹⁴³

The Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore (1937) was the last publication of his career under review here. The volume received only formal acknowledgement from a few reviewers, added nothing to Tagore criticism in America. Had the publishers remembered to remedy an oversight pointed out by Barrett Parker—"It is to be regretted that this volume..... should be edited without introduction, foreword, or preface of any kind, and without notes on the deletions or on any of the translations,"¹⁴⁴—there may have been occasion for new discussion.¹⁴⁵

As Western literary criticism of Tagore based on knowledge of Bengali, Edward Thompson's study of Tagore as poet and dramatist had a successor in 1939 when Vincenc Lesny's critical biography in Czech was translated into English, and published from England.¹⁴⁶ Like Thompson's book, this one does not seem to have attracted any notice in America. Lesny learned Bengali while he was a visiting professor at Santiniketan, and he completed his book in 1937, which enabled him to cover Tagore's career more completely than Thompson had. However, Lesny was more concerned with Tagore's ideas than with his art, and the void only partially filled by Thompson remained until Tagore's death in 1941.¹⁴⁷

There was little by way of literary evaluation in the various editorials and articles with which America marked the passing of Tagore in 1941. The *New York Times* did muse a little about how his fame in the West had declined—"Was it the poet or his

143. *Books*, June 5, 1932, p. 9.

144. *Boston Evening Transcript* (January 30, 1937), sec. vi, p. 3.

145. Even the latest edition, in 1961, continues to be without an introduction or notes.

146. *Rabindranath Tagore : His Personality and Work* (London, 1939) translated by George McKeever Phillip.

147. The bibliography in Aronson's book, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-136, lists a number of studies of Tagore in various European languages. Very few consider the literary aspects and even fewer are based on reading Tagore in the original.

publishers that took perhaps too much advantage of his tide of reputation?.....Was it a certain monotony of style and image, was it metaphysics and a mystic strain, was it his over-production of lyrics, plays, novels, and what not, that abated the demand?"—but instead of answering these questions, this writer recommended that a more judicious selection from Tagore's writings than had been made till now be published in an anthology.¹⁴⁸

One article of this time which deserves special mention is "an appraisal and reminiscence" written by Theodore Maynard,¹⁴⁹ himself a poet, who records how prejudiced he had been against Tagore the man until he met him, and how contemptuous he had been of Tagore the poet until he heard Tagore's poetry untranslated. "And when I heard him recite his poems in Bengali," Maynard wrote, "I knew that he was a great poet..." Such recognition is not admissible as literary criticism, but it had been offered already by Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson among others in America,¹⁵⁰ and the English poet laureate Laurence Binyon recalled a similar experience in his address at the Tagore Memorial Meeting of the India Society in London on September 30, 1941 : ".....Tagore had been chanting to us—I don't know whether to call it reciting or singing—some of his lyrics in Bengali. I had only known the poems in the English prose-translations, and was astonished at the difference."¹⁵¹

For a last American word in the period under review, we can turn to the chapter on Tagore in Philo M. Buck's study, *Directions in Contemporary Literature* (New York, 1942).¹⁵² Here the writer gives as much emphasis to Tagore's poems and plays as to Tagore's essays as an approach to the understanding of India. Years ago Hamilton Mabie had said this in recommending that "the Western statesmen who are called upon to for-

148. Editorial, August 8, 1941, p. 14.

149. "I Beard the Bard," *Commonweal*, XXXIV, (September 5, 1941), 462-465.

150. See "News Notes," *Poetry*, LVIII (September 1941), 348-349.

151. See special issue of *Indian Arts and Letters*, XV (1941), 58-60.

152. See pp. 149-168.

Twelve other authors considered as "directions" in this book are : George Santayana, Gerhart Hauptmann, Andre Gide, Luigi Pirandello, Marcel Proust, Eugene O'Neill, Aldous Huxley, Jules Romains, Hitler, Mikhail Sholokov, T. S. Eliot, and Thomas Mann.

multate a Far Eastern policy ought to be required to take an examination in Tagore's *Sadhana* and *The King of the Dark Chamber*."¹⁵³ But Philo Buck is aware that Tagore is not the only avenue of approach to India through literature ; what makes Tagore unique is that he is perfectly bilingual and thus accessible to the English-speaking world. Quite conveniently for our study here, this opinion expressed by a teacher of comparative literature seeks to find a final place for Tagore in the broadest possible context of world literature.

153. In the introduction to B. K. Roy, *Rabindranath Tagore : The Man and his Poetry* (1915), p. 19.

CHAPTER FOUR

TAGORE IN PERSON

An attempt to reconstruct Tagore's visits to America entirely through newspaper reports gives one a fairly clear picture of the course of Tagore's reputation in this country. There are strong upward curves and steep declines in such a graph, there are blank spaces, there are sudden crests and troughs so close as to make any precise plotting difficult. Such a measure would, of course, be of his popularity in America in a general sense, having little or nothing to do with his literary reputation. In this chapter, the public reception of Tagore will be our prime concern, and newspaper accounts have been taken to be central to such a consideration. Entries in the *New York Times Index* provide a broad outline of the area to be explored.

The gaps in newspaper information can often be filled by studying Tagore's correspondence for those periods of time when he was out of the reporters' sight. An indefatigable letter-writer to the end of his life, Tagore naturally wrote more when he was unoccupied with public appearances, and a large number of letters written in and about America are to be found in such published material as his *Letters to a Friend* (New York, 1928) and the seven-volume collected edition of his letters, *Chithi-patra* (Calcutta, 1942-60), or in such unpublished material as that in the Harriet Monroe collection at the University of Chicago and the papers of Sir William Rothenstein at Harvard. In addition to factual information about dates and places, these letters help to correlate Tagore's impact upon America to his own reactions.

A third source for this chapter has been the information obtained from persons who came in contact with Tagore during his visits. These sources vary considerably : reminiscences like those of Mrs. Mayce Seymour, biographies like the one of Mrs. Harriet Moody by Olivia Dunbar, autobiographies like

the one of Miss Harriet Monroe. In contrast to press-interviews and reports, these sources offer intimate and enduring views of Tagore's presence in America.

Finally, the second and third volumes of *Rabindra-jibani* describe each visit in some detail and provide much background information. As will be seen, each visit that Tagore made is distinct from the previous in its purpose, in the nature of its reception, in its impression upon Tagore as well as upon America, and in what it contributed to the making or marring of Tagore's reputation. A detailed itinerary of the visits has been compiled in Appendix B.

i. The first visit : October 1912 to March 1913

"Following the path of the sunset,"¹ Tagore came to America for the first time, arriving at New York on October 27, 1912. There was no one to receive him—as there would be on subsequent visits—but his arrival was not wholly unnoticed. "My turban attracted the notice of a newspaper interviewer," he wrote that evening to Rothenstein, "and he attacked me with questions but I was almost as silent as my turban. This was my first taste of America—the custom-house and the interviewer"² This first distaste is typical of the way America failed to measure up to Tagore's extremely high—and not always within reason—expectations of her. The failure was by no means one-sided. Tagore also did not live up to the high regard in which he was initially held in America.

When Tagore left India in May 1912 in search of medical attention and rest, there were no actual plans of his visiting America. He came to England, where his translations were then just being "discovered," and his growing circle of friends and admirers would obviously not have permitted him the rest and quiet he required. So, as his son Rathindranath tells us,³ Tagore was easily persuaded to leave England in order to spend some time in America. Accompanied by his son and his daughter-in-law, Pratima, he came to New York and then went on to Urbana, Ill. Their plans were that while Tagore rested,

1. Translated from letter quoted in *Rabindra-jibani*, ii, 334.

2. *Papers WR*, no. 9, *op. cit.*

3. *On the Edges of Time*, p. 123.

Rathindranath would resume his studies at the University of Illinois and Pratima house-keep for them. Within a few days of his settling down at Urbana, Tagore wrote to India in terms which express his happiness : "There is no noise here—the sky is open, the light abundant, and there is uninterrupted leisure. Sometimes I forget I have come to America—almost it seems I am still at home."⁴

Tagore's first real contact with America was through the University of Illinois, where he had sent his son, his son-in-law, and an ex-student of Santiniketan for advanced study.⁵ It was through these Indian students that a few Americans first came to hear of Tagore's Indian fame,⁶ and his actual arrival at Urbana was anticipated with some interest by the university community there.⁷ The house of Professor Arthur Seymour soon became the centre of what later came to be known as the Tagore Circle, and Mrs. Mayce Seymour wrote what must be the first popular appreciation of Tagore by an American. It appeared in the university monthly magazine, embellished with a photograph of Tagore and a selection of his poems in English.⁸ This was followed by a local student's essay in another periodical,⁹ and these two pieces of campus journalism must be granted their historical place in a record of Tagore's reception in America.

Tagore had hoped to "take a holiday from writing for some time" and read a lot of books at leisure,¹⁰ but within ten days of his arrival at Urbana he had to forfeit the pleasures of such self-indulgence when the local Unitarian minister, Albert R. Vail¹¹ invited him to speak at the local Unity Club. It is not sur-

4. Translated. From letter quoted in *Rabindra-jibani*, ii, 335.

5. See *On the Edges of Time*, pp. 74-80.

6. This is described in an article by Mrs. Mayce F. Seymour, "That Golden Time," *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, XXV (1959), 1-15.

7. Details about all the visits to Urbana made by Tagore are given in Harold M. Hurwitz's article, "Tagore in Urbana, Ill." *Indian Literature*, IV (1961), 27-36.

8. "Rabindra Nath Tagore," *The Illionois*, IV (December 1912), 106-110.

9. Leslie Carroll Baker, "Rabindranath Tagore," *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, III (December 1912), 83-84.

10. See *Rabindra-jibani*, ii, 335.

11. Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay has noted that in a manual for religious instruction in junior grades written by Albert R. Vail and Emily Vail, *Heroic Lives in Universal Religion* (Boston, n. d.), there is a chapter on Tagore and his father. See *Rabindra-jibani*, ii, 335, n. 5.

prising that the Unitarians rather than any other Christian denomination should have approached Tagore. The Hindu reform movement founded by Raja Rammohun Roy in 1818 which came to be known as the Brahmo Samaj, came closest to Unitarianism among Christian reform movements. The Tagores had supported one aspect or another of the Brahmo Samaj movement for three generations, and in 1912 Tagore himself was considered the leader of its Adi Samaj sect. Between Tagore and the Unitarians, therefore, there was a natural mutual affinity. But the important fact here is that Tagore's initial overture to America was on religious premises.

Apart from the four papers read by Tagore to the Unity Club in Urbana, he frequently met with a less formal gathering consisting of "the Unitarian minister, two young English instructors, and a little group of faculty members and students,"¹² to whom he used to read translations from his poetry and drama. It must have been of great benefit to him to have at hand a friendly and willing audience of native English speakers on whom he could try out his use of the language. He was obviously enjoying the attention being accorded him, because he wrote to Rothenstein, "My reputation as a poet is fast spreading here but it has not made my stay here impossible as yet....."¹³ Though it was his reputation as a poet that sent him to Chicago a month later, it was in the role of religious philosopher that he would appear at Rochester and at Cambridge, Mass., later in the trip.

Urbana was to occupy a unique place in Tagore's entire American experience, and not the least reason for this was that it was here that he first saw his English *Gitanjali* in print—in the original India Society edition, sent by Rothenstein—and soon afterwards heard of the stir it had begun making in England.¹⁴ It was here, too, that he came to know that *Poetry* of Chicago had published six of his poems in its December 1912 issue. When his son wrote to *Poetry* asking for some extra copies,¹⁵ Harriet Monroe promptly invited the poet to visit

12. Mayce F. Seymour, *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, XXV, 9.

13. Letter dated December 15, 1912, *Papers WR*, No. 18.

14. Letters to Rothenstein, dated November 12 and 19, 1912, *Papers WR*, nos. 13 and 14.

15. Harriet Monroe, *A Poet's Life*, p. 320.

An unsigned, typewritten letter from R. N. Tagore, Jr., to the Editor,

Chicago. Thereafter came the invitation to participate in the congress of the National Federation of Religious Liberals to be held at Rochester towards the end of January 1913. This was followed by a request from Professor James Houghton Woods of the Philosophy Department at Harvard to deliver a series of lectures there.

If a portion of his stay at Urbana was taken up with experiences that were evolving towards a larger acquaintance with America, another portion was devoted to endless thought, speculation and self-debate about the school at Santiniketan he had set up in 1901. All the letters written home at this time reveal this preoccupation,¹⁶ and a strong motivation for his venturing out from Urbana was that this would give him an opportunity to visit educational institutions and meet with educationists. The perennial problem of funds for Santiniketan was never long out of his thoughts and he asked Rothenstein just before he left for Chicago, "If publishers could be had in America for my children's poems or some of my plays offering better terms than I could expect from English publishers, should I close with them [?] Dr. Lewis of Chicago told my son that publishers here are much more liberal and prompt with their cash than they are on your side."¹⁷ He obviously had no idea yet that there could be a market for him in this country.

Tagore did not find it easy to stir out of his sanctuary at Urbana, and when Harriet Monroe renewed her invitation he replied, "For sometime past I have been living a quiet and retired life and I feel great reluctance in visiting big towns where I am likely to be drawn into all kinds of engagements which bewilder me. To tell you candidly this is the reason why I am hesitating to go to Chicago or to Boston."¹⁸ He kept postponing a definite acceptance, and wrote to Rothenstein at the end of December, "I had several invitations to go there [Chicago] but I have succee-

dated December 9, 1912, is among the records of *Poetry* magazine in the Harriet Monroe Collection at the University of Chicago. This source has been referred to from here on as the *HM Collection*.

16. These letters are to be found in *Chithipatra*, iv (Calcutta, 1943-44), v (Calcutta, 1945-46).

Relevant extracts are quoted in *Rabindra-jibani*, ii, 337-343.

17. Letter dated January 16, 1913, *Papers WR*, no. 23.

18. Letter dated December 25, 1912, *HM Collection*.

ded in warding them off."¹⁹ Though his son was to tell a Chicago newspaperman in January that Tagore felt he had a message to deliver to the western world²⁰, it does not seem Tagore was very anxious to do so yet.

When he did decide to accept Miss Monroe's invitation, it caused a brief predicament. "*Poetry* had no fund for entertainment, and neither of its editors could make room.....for this foreigner from afar and his son and daughter-in-law."²¹ They appealed to Mrs. Harriet Moody who, after some hesitation on account of her own unhappy preoccupations, agreed to receive the Tagores at her spacious house.²² Thus began a relationship between Tagore and Mrs. Moody which runs, as Stephen Hay has aptly expressed it, "like a golden thread through all his visits to America."²³ Apart from what he gained from her in friendship and hospitality, she set about creating an American career for Tagore, by inviting suitable persons to meet him, arranging contacts for him, and accompanying him on some of his trips inside America. The benefits were not all one-sided. Mrs. Moody's life had been at a low ebb ever since the death of her husband, the poet and playwright, William Vaughn Moody, but "she was regvanized by this new meeting and what it promised.....Tagore's visit set the machinery of her life, her true life, in motion again."²⁴ Tagore himself saw this change in her: "I feel I have been of help to her—for she was gradually drifting towards the vague region of Christian Science and its allied cults which are in vogue here and which are so destructive of spiritual sanity and health."²⁵

He spent three days in Chicago before any newspaper was aware of his presence.²⁶ In fact, when he spoke at the Abraham Lincoln Center, the only advance publicity he received was in

19. Letter dated December 30, 1912, *Papers WR*, no. 20.

20. According to an unidentified newspaper clipping in the Visva-Bharati University archives, quoted by Stephen Hay, *American Quarterly*, XIV (1962), 442.

21. Harriet Monroe, *A Poet's Life*, p. 320.

22. See Olivia H. Dunbar, *A House in Chicago*, p. 93.

23. p. 443.

24. Dunbar, p. 94.

25. Letter to Rothenstein dated February 14, 1913, from New York *Papers WR*, no. 24.

26. See news-item, *Chicago Tribune*, January 25, 1913.

a printed circular issued by the Center which exhorted individuals reading it to "extend this notice and come and hear a kindred spirit and fellow-worker on the other side of the globe."²⁷ For the rest of his time at Chicago he was the centre of attraction at the Grove Avenue household. As described by Harriet Monroe, "The Hendersons and I—and others—used to gather around Mrs. Moody's hearth fire, listening to his [Tagore's] chanting of his lyrics, or to his talk of Oriental creeds, which made us feel we were sitting at the feet of Buddha."²⁸ It is to be strongly doubted if the Buddha ever sang, but Tagore certainly revelled in this role and returned to it again for about two weeks in March 1913 before he left the country. He wrote to Harriet Monroe from London, "Memories of my Chicago days come to me in flashes—they were happy days to me—full of quiet friendliness and leisure."²⁹ All his letters to Harriet Moody in the next two years refer with gratitude and nostalgia to those Chicago days.³⁰

Announced merely as "Mr. R. N. Tagore of Calcutta" at Rochester, he spoke on "Race Conflicts" at the afternoon session on the second day of the Congress of Religions. There was little publicity of the content of this speech,³¹ but his participation on such an occasion provided a basis for the subsequent American image of him as a religious preacher of sorts. This image received more distinct outline from the lectures at Harvard which followed, three to Professor Woods' philosophy class,³² and two others³³ to a Philosophy Club and a Divinity Club. In their final form these lectures appear in the *Sadhana* volume which was to compete with *Gitanjali* in America as a representative work by Tagore. That attention should have been diverted from Tagore the writer to Tagore the philosopher was entirely his own doing.

At Harvard he met several Indian students³⁴ who had come

27. From copy of circular in *UChiMic*.

28. *A Poet's Life*, p. 321.

29. Letter dated May 23, 1913, *HMCollections*.

30. Quoted by Dunbar, pp. 97, 98-99. The original letters are among the William Vaughn Moody papers in the University of Chicago archives.

31. See reports in *Rochester Union and Advertiser* and *Rochester Herald* of January 31, 1913.

32. See *Harvard Crimson*, February 15, 18 and 20, 1913.

33. See *Boston Evening Transcript*, February 18, 19, 1913.

34. One of them, Narendranath Sen Gupta wrote a letter to the *Harvard*

there for advanced study through the newly formed National Council of Education of India. Immediately he began to think of how these students could be utilized in his own educational projects and he wrote to a Santiniketan teacher, "If I could use people like them to open up a field for scientific research there, it could gradually develop into something valuable....."³⁵ But such ambitions needed money before they could be realized, and we find another letter written from Cambridge, Mass., regretting that he had been able to do nothing about raising funds in America : "The trouble is, it is impossible for me to go about propagating the idea and begging money for it. To turn to another nation for the needs of my own country seems so embarrassing that I am unable to say clearly that we need money."³⁶ This reluctance may be noted, because the professed purpose of all his subsequent visits to America was chiefly to seek financial assistance for his own projects for the betterment of India.

Tagore's first visit to America would probably have been forgotten had it not been for two things which happened soon after he left in March 1913—first, the Macmillan Company undertook to publish his English works and began issuing them simultaneously from London and New York ; second, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. If the international award brought his name into major newspapers throughout the United States, his publishers were equally responsible for making him well known, maintaining the steady pressure that brought seven books by him into the American market in quick succession between November 1913 and January 1915. Though the *Forum* editor wryly commented in January 1914," Rabindranath Tagore.....has received more adulation recently than is salutary for most human beings,"³⁷ the so-called "Tagore craze" was on.

Since the popular manifestation of the "craze" was never recorded, we can only study its impact through the articles and book reviews and other published material of the period. But at least one telling comment from first hand experience can be

Crimson, February 17, 1913, mentioning Tagore's practical achievements.

35. Translated. From letter quoted in *Rabindra-jibani*, ii, 337.

36. Translated. From letter quoted, *ibid.*

37. Editorial note, *LI* (January 1914), 160.

cited as proof of the phenomenon. John Butler Yeats, father of the poet, was in America at this time, and in one of his letters from New York to his daughter he wrote : ".....I was at an At Home at———last Monday. It is astonishing how uninteresting the———seem to be—the surprising thing being that they have so little intelligence. ———professes herself to be an enthusiastic admirer of Tagore. Yet she looked blank with astonishment and no doubt horror, when she learned from me that he is a Hindoo. They all talk Literature, and the drama, yet on these subjects they have not the most elementary knowledge."³⁸ The publisher has tactfully omitted names and other indications from this letter, but it gives us a clear insight into the kind of vogue being enjoyed by Tagore.

The vogue was pronounced enough for the poet Joyce Kilmer to lash out against it in an article in the Catholic magazine, *America*.³⁹ Here the writer reduces Tagore to the level of "that dear, dear Swami who tells you all about your 'aura' at those wonderful afternoons at Mrs. Van Dusenbury's," and ridicules Tagore's philosophy as teaching others "just have a good time and love everybody and your soul will migrate and migrate and migrate until it pops off into the Infinite !" Accusing Tagore of luring good Christians to "substitute fatalism for hope, Nirvana for heaven, and.....Krishna for Jesus Christ," Kilmer indignantly demands to know, "Isn't there heathenism enough in this country already without importing a supply from India?"

The very passion of this protest is some measure of the magnitude of what it is a protest against. But in spite of his anger and rhetoric, Joyce Kilmer is able to predict : "The fad chiefly flourishes among club-women and their male parasites, a class which fortunately is notoriously fickle. Some other novelty will come along.....and Mr. Tagore's works will go up into the garret with the Ouija board and the ping-pong rackets." The prediction is ominously reminiscent of Ezra Pound's misgivings of two years back, or even earlier the negative prophecy made by Yeats about the *Gitanjali* poems that they would not "lie in little well-printed books upon ladies' tables.....or be carried

38. Letter to Elizabeth Yeats, dated February 17, 1915, *J. B. Yeats : Letters to His Son W. B. Yeats and Others*, ed. Joseph Hone (New York, 1946), p. 209.

39. "Rabindranath Tagore," XIII (July 17, 1915), 355.

about by students at the university to be laid aside when the world of life begins.”⁴⁰ In view of what happened later, both Pound and Yeats seem to have been strangely prescient about the fate of their protege.

ii. The second visit : September 1916 to January 1917

Tagore's second visit to the United States was different in every possible way from his first visit. Four years back he had come on the private visit of a father to his son, made very few public appearances, and was little known outside the circle of his personal friends. This time his visit was planned and proclaimed from long beforehand ; he came committed to fulfil professional obligations and accomplish some private ends ; he travelled from coast to coast, literally, and was pursued by publicity wherever he went. There was a newspaper item on him for practically every day of his visit.⁴¹ The so-called “Tagore craze” that had broken out in America soon after the Nobel Prize award was to shift to quite another dimension with the actual physical presence of Tagore in this country.

We learn from Mrs. Harriet Moody's biography that Tagore had been contemplating a second visit as early as the spring of 1915,⁴² but it did not materialize until a year later when, quite unexpected by him, he received a cable from the J. B. Pond Lyceum of New York⁴³ offering him a round sum of twelve thousand dollars for a lecture tour of the United States.⁴⁴ He accepted without hesitation because, besides the opportunity

40. See Pound's article in *New Freewoman*, I, 187, and Yeats's introduction to *Gitanjali*, p. xv.

41. Clippings from September 18 to December 13 have been collected in the University of Chicago microfilm record of this visit. This microfilm has been used extensively in this section. and referred to as *UChiMic*.

42. Dunbar, *A House in Chicago*, p. 125.

43. The James B. Pond Lyceum was established in 1873 and its first speaker had been Ann Eliza, the nineteenth wife of Brigham Young. Since then, it had “brought out” famous persons like Henry M. Stanley, Matthew Arnold, Lieutenant Peary, etc. Among the forty-odd speakers on its list for the 1916 season, headed by Tagore, were Harley Granville Barker, Wilfrid Wilson Gibson and Edgar Lee Masters.

44. Later Tagore was informed that he would have to deliver forty lectures. Finally, the contract was for forty lectures at five hundred dollars per lecture from September 1916 to April 1916. See *Rabindra-jibani*, ii, 456, 465.

of visiting America again, this would enable him to replenish the funds of his school in which he had already invested his entire Nobel Prize money. Also, the war in Europe compelling him to travel across the Pacific, he would have a chance to realize his long-cherished desire to visit Japan.⁴⁵ He sailed from Calcutta on May 3, 1916, spent about three months in Japan, and arrived at Seattle on September 18. James B. Pond met him on the ship and Tagore said to him that he was entirely at Pond's disposal, prepared to give as many lectures as required, since this would swell the Santiniketan treasury. As he said to reporters at his first press interview, "The purpose dearest to my heart—to get funds to carry on my school for boys in India. That is the thought nearest my heart."⁴⁷

Starting from Seattle in the last week of September 1916. Tagore travelled southwards to Los Angeles, then crossed and returned across the continent in the next four months. A large majority of his public addresses was devoted to his lecture on "The Cult of Nationalism," later published in the book, *Nationalism* (1917). Only rarely did he give readings from his poems and plays and stories. His sponsors at various American cities were generally one of these four kinds—wealthy private groups like the Sunset Club of Seattle ; cultural organizations like the Drama League of America ; large universities and small colleges ; and, Unitarian churches. Whether at public addresses or at private gatherings, Tagore never failed to draw a crowd. The bulk of his audiences everywhere was composed of women, and this fact has often been cited against him, though this has probably been true always of American lecture audiences.

To any one reading the press coverage of Tagore's second visit today, it would seem that the first noticeable impact he made upon America was by the sheer spectacle of his presence. His was a remarkable figure even without the self-styled dress he affected, and invariably the news reports began by stressing the unusual in his appearance. He had been described before he arrived as "the poet who looked like a poet."⁴⁸ and during the

45. *Ibid.*, ii. 442.

46. As reported in *Los Angeles Times*, September 18, 1916.

47. *Los Angeles Times*, September 19, 1916.

48. Anon. article, "India's Message to Japan," *Outlook*, CXIII (August 9, 1916), 856-858.

trip no report seemed complete without an illustration carrying the typical caption : "Indian poet photographed in his native garb." This may have made Tagore's face and clothes familiar all over America, yet these details could not but have diverted attention from what he wrote or said. Or, what was more damaging, what he wrote or said was taken to be the way of self-expression inevitable in a man whose outward appearance so closely accorded to such stereotypes as "the tall, dreamy-ed Oriental" or "the wise man from the East."

The lecture bureau responsible for Tagore's visit obviously believed in the virtue of publicity, but in the early part of his trip the press often promoted Tagore for the wrong reasons. When he first spoke about Santiniketan to reporters, they somehow got the impression that Tagore had started a reformatory school for juvenile delinquents.⁴⁹ The news from Europe that Tagore's *Chitra* had recently been produced at Berlin gave the New York *Sun* reason to discern a political significance in the event, because by this gesture "the Germans may hope to further the discontent manifested by certain factions in India against Great Britain's rule."⁵⁰ However, the New York *German Herald* rightly declared, "Kunst ist neutral,"⁵¹ and writers in other newspapers⁵² pointed out the absurdity of seeing in the Berlin production a subtle German attempt to seduce Indian loyalties. The biggest sensation of the trip happened in San Francisco when a scuffle in front of Tagore's hotel between two groups of Indians⁵³ was magnified by the local press into an incipient plot to assassinate Tagore.⁵⁴ While headlines screamed the story across the country,⁵⁵ Tagore had to undergo police protection

49. See accounts in Los Angeles *Times*, September 19, 1916 ; Seattle *Post-Intelligence*, September 20, 1916 ; Chicago *Herald*, October 8, 1916.

50. October 4, 1916.

51. October 4, 1916, *UChiMic*.

52. See anon. article, "Tagore's *Chitra* in Germany," Brooklyn *Daily Eagle*, October 7, 1916 ; editorial, "Tagore," Detroit *Tribune*, October 15, 1916 ; Ernest P. Horowitz, letters to the editor, New York *Times* and New York *Sun*, October 18, 1916.

53. One was the radically anti-British Hindusthan Gadar Party, which was later involved in the so-called German-Indian Conspiracy Trial of San Francisco in 1918.

54. See reports in San Francisco *Call*, October 5, 1916, and San Francisco *Examiner*, October 6, 1916.

55. For example, "Hindu Poet Flees to Save His Life" (Portland *Tele-*

much against his will and gave a statement saying, ".....I take this opportunity to emphatically assert that I do not believe there was a plot to assassinate me, though I had to submit to the farce of being guarded by the police, from which I hope to be relieved for the rest of my visit to this country."⁵⁶

Commenting on this last episode, the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* said that "some of the stories which have circulated about him.....suggest that he is being subjected to American methods of press-agentry."⁵⁷ By now Tagore was fairly exasperated with the horde of reporters that flocked to him everywhere. A week later in Salt Lake City he refused to give any interviews, but a couple of quick-thinking reporters made their way to his hotel room by posing as "a local citizen of prominence, with the vice-consul of the British Empire."⁵⁸ When asked at Denver, his next stop, which American marvel had impressed him the most, Tagore tersely replied, "The American newspaper reporter."⁵⁹

Tagore had had no previous experience of the tireless ubiquity of the American reporter nor of the high-powered publicity that was possible in the American press, and he never really learned to cope with it. If at first he was flattered by the ceaseless attention, gradually he became disgusted with it and a little frightened. Yet it must be admitted that if in trying to make good copy out of him, reporters occasionally exceeded their rights, without the persistent limelight on him Tagore would never have become so well known in this country. Also some of the personal interviews reveal how readily the interviewer was overcome by the poet's presence and did him far more than justice when reporting on these interviews.⁶⁰ These interview-reports are in striking contrast to the news-reviews where the

gram) ; "Poet Tagore Flees From Reported Assassination Plot" (St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*) ; "Tagore Flees to Escape Hindu Plot" (Louisville *Herald*) ; "Hindu Poet Under Guard of Police" (Syracuse *Herald*) ; Hindu Savant Safe After Wild Flight Under Body Guard" (Minneapolis *Tribune*).

56. Statement published in Los Angeles *Examiner*, October 7, 1916.

57. October 15, 1916.

58. Salt Lake City *Telegram*, October 15, 1916.

59. *Rocky Mountain News*, October 17, 1916.

60. For some representative interviews, see Dean Collins in Portland *Oregonian* (September 27, 1916) ; Douglas Tourney in Los Angeles *Examiner* (October 8, 1916) ; Joyce Kilmer in New York *Times* (October 29, 1916), Bailey Millard in *Bookman* (November 1916), *op. cit.*

writer looked upon him from afar. The most interesting evidence of this is to be seen in two articles by Joyce Kilmer. Little over a year back, Kilmer had reprimanded fellow Americans severely for taking this "clever Oriental journalist" seriously and letting him spread heathenism in a Christian country.⁶¹ Now, after interviewing him for *New York Times*, Kilmer wrote that "the impression to be gathered from an unbiased reading of his work, and strengthened by conversation with him, is that he is not so much a philosopher or religious leader as a practical and extraordinarily prolific man of letters, with a keen appreciation of Western thought."⁶² This unconditional volte face is not surprising. It is possible to split the whole body of writing on Tagore, in India or abroad, between writers who had some personal association with him and those who had none. That the former invariably incline towards idolatry while the latter lean the opposite way only perpetuates the gulf that even now divides critical opinion about Tagore.

Though he was lionized wherever he went, Tagore appeared to enjoy most his visits to educational institutions. Early in the tour he wrote home, "Especially to students I hope to impart my ideas effectively. Their enthusiasm is a great delight to me."⁶³ He was invited to more colleges in the northeast than in any other region of the country. At Yale he was presented with the Yale Bicentennial Medal, and while making the presentation the President of the university recalled the institution's ancient debt to the poet's homeland.⁶⁴ A less formal but no less sincere token of appreciation was the handwritten document given to him by the members of the college committee which arranged his visit to Wellesley College.⁶⁵ On an unscheduled visit to Smith College, Tagore ignored his repertoire of prepared speeches and talked instead about his school at Santiniketan and what he hoped to achieve there. All his visits to college campuses were of special interest to him because he was always looking for ideas which he could use to improve his own school.

61. *America*, XIII, 355.

62. "A Talk with Sir Rabindranath Tagore," October 29, 1916.

63. Translated. From letter dated October 11, 1916, quoted in *Rabindra-jibani*, ii, 467.

64. Copy of presentation speech in *UChiMic*. For a report of the occasion, see *Yale Daily News*, December 7, 1916.

65. Copy of document in *UChiMic*.

If the "Tagore craze" much derided by Joyce Kilmer had become prevalent in America since Tagore was last here, what may be called a "Tagore cult" was very much in evidence during his present tour. Cultural organizations took the lead in arranging discussions about Tagore's life and works, and Los Angeles in particular provided many such opportunities to new admirers of Tagore.⁶⁶ The recital of his poems in English and the rendering of his songs set to Western music became the staple feature of "Tagore evenings" at many places in the country.⁶⁷ A professional performance of *Chitra*, with Mme. Ulla Nazimova in the leading role, was planned by the Stage Society of New York.⁶⁸ Another widespread manifestation of the cult found expression in religious discourse. The Unitarians of Urbana had launched Tagore's career as a public speaker in America, and Tagore's ideals were expounded at various centres of Unitarian following.⁶⁹ Other denominations were exposed to Tagore in sermons, when Christian as well as Jewish clergymen spoke about Tagore or preached some of his ideas.⁷⁰ And all the while he was being celebrated as poet and as preacher, Tagore himself was appearing in a very different light to American audiences.

The most important aspect of Tagore's second tour of America was his principal lecture, "The Cult of Nationalism." This lecture was repeated most often during the tour, and it dominated his entire visit to a such an extent that the impressions he left behind can be gauged from the reactions to this one speech alone.

66. See announcements in Los Angeles *Herald*, October 2 and 4, 1916 ; Los Angeles *Express*, October 6, 1916 ; Los Angeles *Times*, October 7, 1916 ; Los Angeles *Examiner*, October 15, 1916 ; Buffalo *Evening News*, October 17, 1916 ; Seattle *Post-Intelligence*, October 20, 1916 ; Nashville *Banner*, November 3, 1916 ; Milwaukee *Journal*, November 23, 1916 ; Los Angeles *Examiner*, November 27, 1916 ; New York *Sun*, December 17, 1916.

67. See announcements in Los Angeles *Express*, October 4, 1916 ; Nashville *Banner*, October 13, 1916 ; Pittsburgh *Times*, November 5, 1916 ; Baltimore *Sun*, November 9, 1916 ; Boston *American*, December 3, 1916.

68. New York *Telegraph*, November 2, 1916.

There is no record of the play's actually having been performed.

69. See notices in Wichita *Beacon*, October 7, 1916 ; Cincinnati *Enquirer*, October 29, 1916 ; Paterson *News*, November 4 and 8, 1916 ; Toledo *Blade*, November 24, 1916 ; Fresno *Republican*, December 11, 1916.

70. See notices in Los Angeles *Examiner*, October 21, 1916 ; Philadelphia *Record*, December 4, 1916 ; Columbus *Journal*, December 7 and 8, 1916 ; Detroit *Free Press*, December 8, 1916 ; New York *Sun*, December 17, 1916.

He had used this lecture already in Japan, and the *Literary Digest* made this forecast two months before Tagore reached America : "He is due to arrive almost immediately on our Western shores to rebuke our civilization, perhaps, as he did that of Japan."⁷¹

According to Tagore's thesis, "nationalism" was the unwholesome spirit which in one form had urged England to enslave the Indian people, in another had plunged the European nations into war, and in general endangered the peace and prosperity of the whole world. As uttered by him in sweeping metaphors, it seemed a wholesale indictment of Western civilizations. Certainly it was not merely a tirade against America, aimed at decrying the American nation, though his incidental and not very tactful observations about American life may have given an anti-American colouring to all his lectures. Had Tagore really been as unappreciative of America as he was made out to be in the American press, he would scarcely have wanted to dedicate his book, *Nationalism*, to the then American president, Woodrow Wilson. He did not, however, receive permission to do so. As recently revealed by Stephen Hay,⁷² when the the president of the Macmillan Company wrote to the White House in March 1917 on the subject, he was told by the President's adviser, Colonel House, that the British Ambassador had advised against such a move because Tagore was believed to be involved in the anti-British plots then being hatched in America by Indian revolutionaries.

It is unlikely that Tagore did not anticipate the reactions that were bound to be provoked by his denunciation of nationalism. That he should have persisted in reiterating this "message" seems strange in view of the fund-raising purpose of this trip. Bailey Millard suggested that his "platform attacks upon Western materialism have been a magnificent advertisement,"⁷³ implying that by appearing to be contumacious of audiences predisposed to be appreciative, Tagore was only ensuring his own publicity. A columnist in the Minneapolis *Tribune* called him "the best

71. Anon. article, "The East Admonishing the East," LIII (July 29, 1916), 252.

72. "Tagore in America," p. 450.

73. "Rabindranath Tagore Discovers America," *Bookman*, XLIV (November 1916), 244-251.

business man who ever came to us out of India," and described his lectures as Tagore scolding Americans "at \$ 700 per scold" while pleading with them "at \$ 700 per plead."⁷⁴ Whatever may have been his precise motive, Tagore traversed this country repeating this lecture at least twenty times, leaving in his wake a flurry of hostile reviews⁷⁵ and caustic editorials.⁷⁶ Earnest letters to the editor appeared from time to time, criticising Tagore for everything from the tone of his voice to the pitch of his intellect.⁷⁷ The mildest charge was that being the impractical dreamer that he was, the Indian poet should stick to writing mystic poetry and not dabble in socio-political theorising. When Tagore said that Western society was being dehumanized by excessive organization, it was pointed out that lack of organization had not brought happiness to India. When Tagore spoke out against British rule in India, history was cited to show that of all the rulers of India, the British had been the most just. When Tagore warned America against greedy commercialism, it was said that this very prospect of money-making had brought Tagore to this country. The most serious charge against Tagore was that by denouncing nationalism wholesale, he was causing harm in various ways : debasing the principles which were then being defended in Europe, preaching social anarchy through denigrating organization, even subverting American youth by advocating pacifism.

Occasionally, Tagore's sympathisers tried to stem the tide. One letter to the Portland *Oregonian* which found Tagore's elocution faulty was answered by another which defended Tagore's

74. Anon. article, "As to Mr. Tagore," November 15, 1916.

75. For example, see reviews of the lecture in Portland *News* (October 3, 1916) ; Duluth *Tribune* (October 3, 1916) ; Tacoma *News-Leader* (October 8, 1916) ; San Francisco *Call* (October 10, 1916) ; Los Angeles *Express* (October 17, 1916) ; Detroit *Free Press* (November 13, 1916).

76. For example, see editorials, "The Cult of Nationalism," Los Angeles *Times* (October 13, 1916) ; "Voice from the Orient," Salt Lake *Tribune* (October 16, 1916) ; "The Sin of Nationalism," Minneapolis *Journal*, (November 2, 1916) ; "Tagore on America," Philadelphia *Public Ledger* (November 26, 1916) ; "The Dreamer," Syracuse *Post-Standard* (November 30, 1916).

77. For example, see letters from Flora McIntosh, Portland *Oregonian* (September 22, 1916) ; "A Traveler," San Francisco *Examiner* (October 6, 1916) ; L. P. Moyle, Detroit *Free Press* (November 16, 1916) ; John J. Sheridan, Brooklyn *Eagle* (December 10, 1916).

manner of delivery as the one natural to him.⁷⁸ An editorial in the *New York Sun* entitled "Tagore and His Gospel" set off an exchange of opinions over whether Tagore's views were being accurately reported or not.⁷⁹ On the whole his defenders tended to be negative, either ignoring his views altogether to praise his other accomplishments, or explaining the general reaction by saying that no prophet in the world's history had ever been justly appreciated in his own time.⁸⁰ So rarely do we come across an unqualified support of Tagore's ideas that these cannot but be viewed as exceptions to the general reaction.⁸¹ Perhaps the best epitaph on Tagore's "message" of this trip was written by the *Detroit Journal* : "As an abstract theory the message has much that is attractive and engaging. As a suggestion for practical application it obviously is unsuited for mankind as we know it."⁸²

As Tagore came eastwards, the volume of press criticism increased, but that did not turn away listeners. "Probably curiosity quite as much as an eager desire for truth has attracted his audiences," explained Lyman Abbott, adding, "Nevertheless they have listened to his message with respect, and if they have not been converted to his doctrine, they have been captivated by his personality."⁸³ According to Stephen Hay, the fact that

78. See letters to the editor by Flora McIntosh (note 77, above), and by J. H. Hendrickson, October 8, 1916.

79. Editorial on November 26, 1916. Letters to editor from William S. Johnson, November 30, 1916 ; Tracy L. Eagle, December 5, 1916 ; Ernest P. Horowitz, December 11, 1916. Another editorial alluding to this controversy is "Qualifying on Tagore," *Waterbury American*, December 1, 1916.

80. For example, see reviews of the lecture in *Seattle Post-Intelligence* (September 26, 1916) ; *San Francisco Bulletin* (October 15, 1916) ; *Louisville Herald* (November 8, 1916) ; *Philadelphia North American* (November 26, 30, 1916).

Also see editorial, "East and West," *Atlanta Journal* (November 28, 1916).

81. For example, see articles by Redfern Mason, *San Francisco Examiner* (October 3, 1916) ; Malcolm W. Davies, *New York Evening Post* (November 25, 1916), quoted in *Modern Review* (April 1917), pp. 420-421.

Edwin Herbert Lewis' paper on Tagore before the Chicago Literary Club on January 5, 1917, may also be considered in this context.

82. Editorial, "Tagore's Message," November 14, 1916.

83. "A Voice from the East," *Outlook*, CXIV (December 13, 1916), 794-797.

sentiment on the eastern seaboard was in favour of America's entry into the European war was the chief reason why Tagore's anti-nationalism and anti-militarism evoked greater opposition in that region than elsewhere.⁸⁴ In fact, this sense of hostility may have been among the reasons responsible for Tagore's sudden decision in New York not to go through all his remaining engagements. Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay tells us that the decision was quite unpremeditated, but that once Tagore had made up his mind, not even the prospect of substantial financial losses due to the breach of contract could deter him.⁸⁵ It was finally settled with the lecture bureau that dates would be set forward so that he could fulfil the more important commitments before leaving the country in mid-January.

The reason publicly given was that the poet was overcome by the long separation from his native land and was longing to return home. Yet he lingered in Japan on the way home for nearly one month and did not reach India until March 1917. It is generally accepted that the incessant travelling and continuous public engagements had begun to tell on his health. Before the tour was two weeks old he had complained to Harriet Monroe : ".....I am like a show lion in a circus now—I have lost my freedom. I live in a world where time and space have come down to a minimum. For I am being hurled from from one hotel room to another packing incredible amount of engagements and letter writings into the shortest space of timethis tight-fit arrangement of my day's programme is neither healthy nor comfortable. However, I shall try to look cheerful and go on dancing to the tune of your American dollar."⁸⁶ Yet, as Joseph Dees has rightly said, one explanation given later—that the poet had "traveled so far and so rapidly in the hands of a money-wise lecture agent that he often said afterward that his health never recovered from the strain....."⁸⁷—is a little exaggerated because Tagore undertook several arduous trips abroad in the next thirteen years. An additional reason must

84. "Tagore in America," p. 448.

85. See *Rabindra-jibani*, II, 475.

86. Letter dated October 4, 1916, from San Francisco, *HM Collection*.

87. P. G. Krishnaya, obituary article in *India and USA*, I (August 23, 1941), 1-4, quoted by Dees in *Tagore and America*, p. 40, n. 9.

have been his growing disillusionment with America, as can be gathered from remarks made to newsmen in New York.⁸⁸ Edward Thompson's explanation, that he had made a grave mistake in undertaking such a trip and "fled back, early in 1917, to some chance of sanity,"⁸⁹ seems more dramatic than accurate. On the point of departure from San Francisco, Tagore wrote to Rothenstein : "At last I am going home. My steamer sails today. Last three months my world of space and time was completely dislocated—my universe was shattered into bits dancing in a whirlpool....."⁹⁰ Behind the imagery, there is a distinct sense of release from suffering in these lines.

C. F. Andrews commented rather cautiously about the trip eleven years later : "In many ways he [Tagore] was satisfied with his visit, and felt that it had been a success."⁹¹ This qualified statement obviously remembers that during the visit Tagore had encountered more mass adulation as well as more persistent denigration than on any other trip to America. Tagore himself wrote after returning home : "I was assured that my presence was needed just at that moment in America and.....I had occasional satisfaction that I was not merely ornamental but necessary."⁹² On the American side, a cross-section of views about the visit are presented in a *Literary Digest* article,⁹³ where it was shown that Tagore had neither understood America as a nation nor appreciated what Americans as a people had done for him. The one clear result of this visit was that America had found in him a very different person from one she had previously known as a writer of mystical poems, mysterious plays, and abstruse essays. It is remarkable that this should have been anticipated within a week of his arrival in an unsigned feature article in the *Portland Oregonian* : "He is no longer a miracle out of the East, a creature half divine, coming to preach a religion that will in some manner revolutionise Occidental society. He is a man, and as a man he looms all the greater

88. See remarks quoted by 'Literatus' in *Modern Review* (1917), pp. 423, 551, 663.

89. *Poet and Dramatist* (1948), pp. 249-250.

90. Letter dated January 17, 1917, *Papers WR* no. 72.

91. *Letters to a Friend*, p. 69.

92. Letter to Rothenstein dated July 16, 1917, *Papers WR*, no. 73.

93. "How Tagore Found Us," *LIIV* (February 10, 1917), 340-341.

for being stripped of the semi-supernatural trappings that enthusiasts of a few years ago flung about him."⁹⁴

iii. The third visit : October 1920 to March 1921

Tagore's third trip to the United States was a "heart-breaking tragedy" in the opinion of James B. Pond,⁹⁵ while the second trip had been an "unparalleled triumph." Pond had been Tagore's manager on the second trip and was only marginally associated with the third. The contrast stressed by Pond is in no way his testimony to his own abilities. He had strongly advised against Tagore's coming again at the time that he did ; when Tagore did come, Pond helped to salvage the visit from total failure. The whole thing was inopportunately conceived, born amid uncertainty, and that it did not utterly miscarry was due as much to Tagore's own resilience as to the devotion of some of his American friends.

The story of this visit began within a year of Tagore's return to India from the second visit, and more than two years elapsed before Tagore actually arrived in America for the third time. Sometime in March 1918, Tagore drew up plans of a Pacific cruise which would take in Australia, America and Japan. Apparently his baggage was packed and tickets bought, and only official permission to leave the country remained to be obtained, when C. F. Andrews, who was to accompany him, heard in Delhi that Tagore's name had recently been associated in America with the so-called Indo-German Conspiracy.⁹⁶ Apparently certain papers seized in America from German espionage agents contained reference to Tagore, and when thirty-odd Indian residents were rounded up for federal trial for conspiracy at San Francisco in the same connection, Tagore's name had cropped up during the proceedings.⁹⁷ Tagore promptly dispatched a cable to President Woodrow Wilson—it read : "Newspapers received concerning conspiracy trial San Francisco wherein prosecution

94. September 24, 1916.

95. As expressed in an interview. See "When Ibanez Jumped Upon His Hat and Other Literary Troubles," *Literary Digest*, LXXX (October 6, 1923), 50-55.

96. See *Rabindra-jibani*, II, 506-509.

97. Stephen Hay has examined the incident in detail, see pp. 450-452.

counsel implicated me. I claim from you and your country protection against such lying calumny"⁹⁸—and followed up with a letter of protest.⁹⁹ Neither the cable nor the letter was ever acknowledged,¹⁰⁰ and though the American Consul in Calcutta assured him that no one in America would take the allegation seriously,¹⁰¹ Tagore lost all desire to go there now. He wrote to Harriet Moody, ".....after due deliberation I came to the conclusion that it was best for me to give up my visit to your country,"¹⁰² then to Rothenstein, "I have altogether given up my idea of going to America."¹⁰³

America's quite uncharacteristic indifference to Tagore during his third visit is sometimes attributed to the above rumour which made him out to be pro-German and not merely anti-British. Another adverse reaction may have been caused in America by Tagore's renunciation of his knighthood in 1919, in protest against the Jallianwalabagh incident.¹⁰⁴ There was little comment in the American press about this, and one can only speculate that Americans with strong pro-British sentiments may have found it an unworthy act on Tagore's part. When Harriet Moody heard about the incident, it "did not seem greatly to surprise her.....But she was concerned lest his action have an unfavorable effect in England."¹⁰⁵ The British "never forgave what they deemed an unheard of impertinence,"¹⁰⁶ and Tagore's request that he be relieved of his title was never granted. He himself preferred not to use the title any longer. In America—at least as perpetuated in the Library of Congress card, and hence in all library catalogues—the title persists even today, thus

98. Cable dated May 11, 1918, quoted by Kripalani, *A Biography*, p. 284 ; also by Hay, *ibid.*, p. 451.

99. Text of letter reproduced by Hay, *ibid.*

100. See Alex Aronson, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

101. See *Rabindra-jibani*, II, 509.

102. Letter dated May 13, 1918, quoted by Olivia Dunbar, *A House in Chicago*, pp. 155-156.

103. Letter dated October 7, 1918, from Calcutta, *Papers WR*, no. 79.

104. Also known as the Amritsar Massacre, this took place on April 13, 1919, when British troops opened fire on a crowd of Indian demonstrators consisting of men, women and children, massed together inside an enclosed area known as Jallianwalabagh.

105. Dunbar, p. 160.

106. Kripalani, *A Biography*, p. 266.

ignoring what has always appealed to Indians as a noble and courageous gesture.

On his last trip abroad, Tagore had often spoken of the need for an international centre of culture where ideas from all over the world could arrive and mingle, and lead to international understanding and cooperation. Out of this vision came Visva-Bharati, the international university located in India, whose foundation stone was laid on December 23, 1918 near the Santiniketan school. It was to make this concept better known to the world and to invite the world's assistance in enabling him to fulfil the concept that he set forth again from India in May, 1920.

As once before, he had no positive plans when embarking of going to America, though we find him confiding to Rothenstein in a letter from London at the end of July, "I am desperately in need of raising funds for my school—and I can see no other way but lecturing in America which is far more practicable for me than highway robbery or motor-car raids, considering my training and other circumstances."¹⁰⁷ A letter to the J. B. Pond Lyceum brought the candid reply that circumstances were not suitable in America and Pond would not undertake to arrange another lecture tour for Tagore.¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile Tagore travelled in Europe and wrote to C. F. Andrews in India, ".....our American tour has been cancelled. The atmosphere of our mind has been cleared at one sweep of the dense fog of the contemplation of securing money. This is deliverance."¹⁰⁹

But when he returned to London in October, he suddenly decided to make the trip after all. With perhaps no more preparation than writing for hotel accommodation in New York and informing Mrs. Harriet Moody in Chicago, he left for America at the end of the month. For the first few weeks it was not too different from his last visit, but as November went by it was gradually becoming clear that the Tagore era was over, at least in New York City. Though Krishna Kripalani reports, "there was no dearth of publicity or of engagements, social or for lectures, as soon as the public came to know of

107. Letter dated July 31, 1920, *Papers W/R*, no. 85.

108. See *Rabindra-jibani*, III 59.

109. From letter quoted, *ibid.*

his arrival."¹¹⁰ it was nowhere near the breathless schedule traced in daily headlines of four years before.

As Joseph Dees has pointed out,¹¹¹ the *New York Times Index* alone betrays the decline of Tagore as a newsmaker in America. Beyond reporting his arrival and noting a production of his plays, there is nothing in the *Times* to tell that Tagore had spent three months almost continuously in New York. Then, the nature of engagements that came his way is also revealing. There were only four public addresses—the rest were “receptions,” often at dinner, where it was expected that “interested people would have an opportunity to talk to Tagore. About one such reception, Hamlin Garland was to write : “As I saw this long-bearded Indian philosopher expounding the ‘eternal verities’ to a throng of women, naked almost to the waist and swollen with rich food, I said, ‘What a farce ! How can he discuss his ascetic philosophy with such auditors?’”¹¹² Finally, there were those days in between engagements, often weeks at a stretch, when Tagore had nothing to do except ponder and realize the magnitude of his miscalculations of time and place and action.

The time was a post-war era, peopled by the “lost” generation, whose illusions about making the world safe for democracy had been laid to uneasy rest on the other side of the Atlantic, so that idealism was at rather low premium at the moment. The place was huge and noisy New York City, teeming with inhabitants and yet frighteningly impersonal, where the main business of money-making never changed but new fads constantly did, and a novelty of 1916 could no more spark any interest. The action was the essential paradox that Tagore had sensed on his earlier trip and felt more agonizingly this time—namely, that his idealistic motive of promoting better understanding between East and West was at odds with his materialistic purpose of earning enough money to relieve the financial burden of his educational projects at Santiniketan. Similarly, while he had great faith and admiration for American ideals, what he saw of American life at first hand depressed him. Thus, though he wrote to Andrews, “This visit of mine to America has pro-

110. *A Biography*, p. 281.

111. *Tagore and America*, p. 19.

112. *My Friendly Contemporaries* (New York, 1932), p. 320.

duced in me intense contempt for money,"¹¹³ Hamlin Garland wrote him off after one look as "To most of us he was just another speaker harvesting American dollars,"¹¹⁴ a verdict that would be bearable had the harvest been plentiful. John Macy was to condemn Tagore even more severely : "He gives lectures to audiences that are, of course, mostly women. Then when he has got all the money he can get from them... he tells them that they are idle. If they were not, the poor ignorant dears, he would not have had any audiences or any money. It is cad-dish to kick the cow that gives the milk."¹¹⁵

Tagore's frustrations on this trip have been vividly depicted by him in the series of letters which he wrote at this time to C. F. Andrews. Many of these appear in the collection edited and published by Andrews,¹¹⁶ to offer a continuous record of what Tagore underwent during this trip due to the inner contradictions of his position. The letters are full of Tagore's disappointments with America, of despair that his grand scheme may never materialize, of longing to return to his sanctuary in Santiniketan. Also there is a measure of complex self-pity. On the one hand we find bitter resentment at his having to play an unaccustomed role, described by him as "shouting myself hoarse in this noisy world where everybody is crying his own wares."¹¹⁷ On the other hand, there are attempts to explain away his present misery as something necessary for ultimate good : thus, "What is needed of me is sacrifice for truth."¹¹⁸

Almost the only redeeming feature of Tagore's long stay in New York was his meeting with Leonard Elmhirst. This young Englishman, then a graduate student of Agriculture at Cornell University, later helped to give practical shape to Tagore's ideas about rural reconstruction at Santiniketan, and became another of his most devoted non-Indian associates.¹¹⁹ Moreover, it was through Elmhirst that the widowed heiress, Dorothy

113. Quoted in *Rabindra-jibani*, iii, 62.

114. *Op. cit.*, p. 321.

115. *The Critical Game*, p. 126.

116. First published as *Letters from Abroad* (Madras, 1924), later enlarged and published as *Letters to a Friend* (New York, 1928).

117. *Letters to a Friend*, p. 126.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

119. See Leonard Elmhirst, "Personal Memories of Tagore," *A Centenary Volume*, pp. 12-26.

Whitney Straight, came in contact with Tagore and made a large monetary gift to Visva-Bharati.

Andrews has said in his notes to *Letters to a Friend* that Tagore's moods of depression in New York were aggravated by indifferent health, but "as his health improved, his stay in America became brighter, and he wrote more cheerfully."¹²⁰ Also, he left New York for Chicago, where the friendliness and warmth of Mrs. Harriet Moody's household helped him to regain his spirits. While at Chicago, Tagore was informed that James Pond had succeeded in arranging a brief lecture tour in the state of Texas which Tagore had not visited before.¹²¹ The fourteen days of almost continuous travel and speaking left him physically exhausted but he had undergone something like a spiritual rejuvenation. In his own words, ".....since coming to Texas, I have felt as it were a sudden coming of Spring into my life through a breach in the icy castle of Winter."¹²² Either en route to Texas or from Chicago where he returned for another spell of Mrs. Moody's hospitality, he briefly visited Urbana.¹²³ In the second week of March, he finally left Chicago, accompanied by Mrs. Moody, on the first part of his return journey. "Harriet spread her protective wings over Mr. Tagore up to the moment of his departure,"¹²⁴ and she had arranged a meeting between him and Robert Frost in New York, but this did not come off.¹²⁵

Later she wrote to Alice Corbin Henderson : "He was gladly received in America this time, that is, in the northern part. His visit here has resulted in a gift of \$10,000 a year for five years for the endowment of chairs at the university....."¹²⁶ But Tagore had dreamed of five million dollars¹²⁷ towards the realization of his even greater dream of mutual interdependence between East and West. How much he had failed in his own eyes is apparent in a letter he wrote from New York

120. p. 122.

121. See *Rabindra-jibani*, III, 85.

122. *Letters to a Friend*, p. 125.

123. See Harold Hurwitz, "Tagore in Urbana," *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

124. Dunbar. *A House in Chicago*, p. 176.

125. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

126. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-183.

127. As stated by Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay, *Rabindra-jibani*, III, 65.

just before departure : “.....I am suffering from an utter disgust for raising funds. I cannot tell you what an agony of longing I am feeling to go back to my own quiet life and wash my mind clear of all traces of ambition for helping the East and West in etc. etc.....”¹²⁸ And two years later, while talking about the *Sisu Bholanath* poems composed soon after leaving America in 1921, he referred to this visit thus : “When I left America and escaped from this stark materiality I started to write [these poems]I rushed into it in the way a prisoner would rush to the seaside to breathe its air as soon as he was freed.”¹²⁹

Tagore’s “mission” this time, therefore, was a failure. In his analysis of the American indifference to Tagore’s appeals, Padraic Colum generalized in the London *Nation* that “Americans are timid about causes” and consequently had hesitated to show any approval of Tagore’s implicit advocacy of political independence for India.¹³⁰ In Tagore’s own mind there was a nagging suspicion that the British government had somehow prejudiced American opinion against him. “When I was in America the British Agency thwarted me in my appeal to the people for the proposed University,” he wrote to Rothenstein from Europe on his way home,¹³¹ repeated this allegation in another letter next year,¹³² and reverted to this issue in a travel-diary two years later : “They [the British] were afraid that I might broadcast rumours derogatory to England.....Consequently, there was quite an antagonistic pressure in the atmosphere during the few months that I spent in America.”¹³³ Also, his son’s reminiscences include the episode in which some Wall Street financiers are said to have withdrawn promised support to Tagore after being tipped off that the British authorities may not look upon such action favourably.¹³⁴

The real explanation, however, must lie in the very different country that America was in 1920-21 from what it had been in 1916-17. The very elements which had made his previous visit

128. “Letters to W. W. Pearson,” *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, II (1943), 173.

129. *The Diary of a Westward Voyage*, p. 63.

130. “An American Letter,” XXX (December 17, 1921), 472.

131. Letter dated May 8, 1921, from Geneva, *Papers WR*, no. 90.

132. Letter dated July 13, 1922, from Santiniketan, *Papers WR*, no. 91.

133. Entry of October 5, 1924, *The Diary of a Westward Voyage*, p. 56.

134. See *On the Edges of Time*, p. 179.

“successful” were wholly absent this time. Above all, Tagore had again failed to judge the American temper. Last time, this failure was betrayed in the manner and the content of his remarks about the country. This time the misjudgment was in having, against better advice, made the visit at all.

iv. The fourth visit : April 18 to April 20, 1929

Tagore's fourth visit to the United States occurred eight years after his third, this being the longest gap between his visits. It was also his shortest visit, since it lasted only three days, and it ended with—or rather, due to—an ‘incident.’ Because this visit was cancelled before it really got under way, it cannot be examined like his four other visits in order to study reactions, but events leading up to the visit and its abrupt termination are part of the whole history of contacts between Tagore and America.

Until 1921, a steady stream of the English versions of Tagore's work, followed by reviews and articles, used to keep his name before the public eye. In the next eight years, only six books appeared on the American market, and there was a proportionate decrease in American writing about him. Instead, a variety of Tagore's own work was published in American periodicals, most frequently in the *Living Age*.¹³⁵ Most of these were reproduced from the *Modern Review* or the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, the two main outlets of Tagore's English writing at home. The *Living Age* also occasionally reprinted news articles about Tagore from foreign periodicals.¹³⁶

Another way Tagore was kept in touch with America was through individuals. An American nurse, Miss Gretchen Green, went out to assist in the hospital at Santiniketan in 1923, and how her duties diversified the longer she stayed there is amusingly recounted in her book of reminiscences, *The Whole World and Company* (New York, 1936). In the summer of 1925, Bishop F. Bolm Fisher of the Calcutta Methodist Church visited Santiniketan, and thus began a period of association

135. Fourteen items between January, 1922 and December, 1927.

136. For example, the report of a speech by Tagore in Italy in June 1926, published in *Japan Advertiser* (Tokyo) of August 22, 1926, was reproduced in *Living Age*, CCCI (October 15, 1926), 172-176.

between American Methodists and Visva-Bharati as a result of which Reverent Boyd W. Tucker went out from America to work for Tagore.¹³⁷ He returned accompanying Tagore on his fourth visit in 1929. While Tagore was in Europe in 1926, he met Mrs. Mayce Seymour in Rome and Mrs. Harriet Moody in London. The latter invited him to come back with her to America and he declined emphatically enough for her to consider it "Mr. Tagore's rejection of this country."¹³⁸ Reflecting upon this, she wrote to Mrs. Seymour some time later, "..... to me it always seems that Robi Babu's absolute severance from his exterior environment unfits him for getting the real quality of American life or from knowing the deeper truth about his friends and our outstanding leaders....."¹³⁹ The following year Arthur J. Todd published his *Three Wise Men of the East and Other Lectures* (1927), where the title essay summed up his recent visit to India through his portraits of Gandhi, Tagore and the scientist J. C. Bose, all of whom he had met personally. The visit of Horace Alexander to Santiniketan in 1927 brought Tagore in touch with the Society of Friends.¹⁴⁰ At Tagore's request, the American Friends sent Dr. Harry C. Timbres of Baltimore in April 1929 to make a health survey of the rural areas around Santiniketan. It was at the suggestion of Timbres that the American Friends undertook to sponsor Tagore's last trip to America. Timbres came with Tagore then, but returned to Santiniketan for another stretch of service until 1934, this time accompanied by his wife Rebecca.¹⁴¹

During these years, Tagore travelled to Japan and China in 1924, to Argentina in 1924-25, and to Europe in 1926. The first of these trips came to the attention of the *Christian Science Monitor* which commented : "There is on foot an important movement to establish Asiatic concord through the common

137. See *Rabindra-jibani*, III, 216.

138. Dunbar, *A House in Chicago*, p. 227.

139. *Ibid.* Her biographer remarks here, "This may have been the first or perhaps the only almost-critical words that ever came from this most constant of the philosopher's disciples....."

140. See pamphlet, *Rabindranath Tagore and the Society of Friends* (1930), issued by the Friends Society Council of London. A copy of this is in the Peace Collection, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.

141. See Mary Hoxie Jones, *Swords Into Ploughshares* (New York, 1937), p. 135.

culture of Asiatic nations.....It has been accentuated by the recent Japanese exclusion legislation in the United States and stimulated by the recent visit to the Far East of Rabindranath Tagore, who preached the doctrines of idealism opposed to western materialism.”¹⁴² In fact, the first tangible result outside India of Tagore’s preaching of Pan-Asianism was the formation of an Asiatic Association at Shanghai in 1924 following his visit. By some strange coincidence, it was on his visit to the United States in 1912-13 that Tagore had first been urged to visit the Far East by Count Okakura whom he met in Boston.¹⁴³

Tagore’s trip to South America went unnoticed in the American press, but his 1929 trip to Europe gave occasion for some attention. He was reported to have said to a newspaperman in Bucharest that he had no intention of revisiting America.¹⁴⁴ This remark was reproduced in the British press and came to the attention of the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, Ellery Sedgwick, who happened to be in England at that time. Sedgwick had met Tagore at Harvard in 1913, and the *Atlantic* had been the first American periodical to publish Tagore’s prose writing.¹⁴⁵ Sedgwick took it upon himself to write to Tagore asking if he would care to clarify such a “stricture” on America.¹⁴⁶ When Tagore’s reply came, it was published under the title “East to West,” with an editorial note which advised readers : “America is growing up.....and self-criticism, even in public, is tolerated. But if the shafts come from abroad we still put on our armor of proof, and ascribe to jealousy and malevolence what is sometimes said in truth and candor.”

Tagore’s reply began mildly enough, protesting “that some ill-fated remark of mine, hastily uttered in answer to a casual question.....has been netted and pinned down, with its ephemeral wings.....” But the rest of the article belies this protestation, because in it Tagore runs through the entire gamut of his pet aversions about America—the press, the sensationalism,

142. October 3, 1924.

143. See *Rabindra-jibani*, III, 183.

144. *New York Times*, November 22, 1926. Also Stephen Hay, “Tagore in America,” p. 83.

145. See “An Evening in July,” CXII (June 1913), 58.

146. Sedgwick’s letter is reproduced preceding the article, *Atlantic Monthly*, CXXXIX (June 1927), , 729-734.

the advertising, the electioneering, the industrialism, the money-consciousness and so on. Joseph Dees remarks that this "veritable barrage of indictments" betrays that memories of the failure of Tagore's last visit were still rankling.¹⁴⁷ But there is nothing new here that Tagore had not said before on his visits in criticism of America. Only they are collected here, fused together by this opportunity to unburden himself, and given point in passionate prose. A prolonged absence from America had in no way mellowed his disapproval, just as repeated visits seemed only to have enhanced it. This is the mood Mrs. Moody sensed in him, and the article fully bears out her observation : "Nothing but his settled conviction that America is hostile, mediocre and commercial has prevented his coming back this time."¹⁴⁸ After the *Atlantic* outburst, it did not seem likely he would ever come back.

Yet he came back twice more, the first time in continuation of a visit to Canada where he had come to represent India at a conference of the National Council of Education at Vancouver in April 1929. If it required a drastic change of heart to take him to America again, it was a greater change which brought him to Vancouver in the first place. While in America on his previous visits he had received invitations to visit Canada as well, but had refused as a gesture against the discriminatory measures adopted by the Canadian government against Indian immigrants, even though Canada was a British dominion and the Indians were British subjects. This time Tagore had been persuaded by friends in India to accept the invitation because it came from an educational body and would provide opportunity for meeting educationists from all over the world.¹⁴⁹ Also, 'as he wrote to Rothenstein, "I have accepted this invitation in the hope that the long sea voyage across the Pacific will do me good....."¹⁵⁰ He sailed from Bombay on March 1, 1929, made stops at Colombo, Shanghai and Tokyo, before arriving at Victoria in early April.

Again as on two previous visits, America does not seem to have been on Tagore's schedule when he left India. Reporting

147. *Tagore and America*, p. 24.

148. Dunbar, p. 227.

149. *Rabindra-Jibani*, III, 344.

150. Letter dated February 22, 1929 from Calcutta, *Papers WR*. no. 103.

his arrival in Canada, the *Daily Times* of Victoria (British Columbia) said, "He has been deluged with invitations by cable and telegraph to speak before various universities, clubs, and literary organizations throughout Canada and the United States."¹⁵¹ Thus it was after coming to Canada that he decided to visit America for the fourth time. "Tagore had gone out this time in the role of an Educator,"¹⁵² and the invitations, particularly from American universities¹⁵³ must have overcome any reservations he had about visiting America. Some of his happiest moments in this country had been spent on college campuses where, in view of his own background as teacher and school-maker, he felt most at home.

After completing his engagements in Canada,¹⁵⁴ he travelled by railroad from Vancouver to Los Angeles, arriving there on April 18. Waiting for a train the previous night at the Oakland mole, he gave an interview to the San Francisco *Chronicle* in which he is reported to have said, "Make a splash. Stop at the swell hotels. Create an atmosphere, I am advised. That is the way to catch American attention. And sadly enough it seems to be true. Americans seem to have little time for quiet folks....."¹⁵⁵ He also referred to the sensational sales of Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* (1927), which had just then gone into its twenty-second reprint, as proof of American taste : "The greatest indictment against America is the greedy manner in which she seized upon that vulgar book.....The thing is the greatest collection of half-truths and outright lies yet gotten together.....And yet America" devours the thing with relish of vicarious perversion."¹⁵⁶ As before, he had begun another American visit by finding fault with America.

The day after his arrival in Los Angeles, he spoke to a small

151. April 6, 1929. Quoted in *Rabindra-jibani*, III, 346, n. 4.

152. Amiya Chakravarty, "Tagore in Canada," *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, VII (April-July, 1929), 170-172.

153. Prabhat Mukhopadhyay mentions invitations from California, Columbia, Detroit, Harvard and Washington. See *Rabindra-jibani*, III, 349.

154. His addresses in Canada were later published in a little-known booklet, *Education and Leisure*, ed. S. E. Long (London and Toronto, 1930). A copy is available in the Cleveland Public Library.

155. April 18, 1929.

156. *Ibid.*

student gathering at a local college.¹⁵⁷ The University of Southern California announced that Tagore had been invited to hold a six-week course interpreting Indian philosophy and literature. Details had not been worked out yet, but Tagore understood that the lectures would be held in class-rooms and among student groups, and he would make no public appearance.¹⁵⁸ The President of the university hoped, however, that he would be able to arrange an occasion where the Los Angeles public would have an opportunity to listen to Tagore.

On April 20, to the great consternation of the university officials and puzzlement of the general public, it was heard that Tagore had cancelled his programme and was leaving the United States immediately.

"I regret that my weak health compels me to cut short my visit in this place," Tagore wrote to President Rufus von Klein-Smid of the University of Southern California. "Unfortunately, I am not in a condition to accept any responsibility that puts the least strain upon my strength, and so I hope you will excuse my early departure....."¹⁵⁹ He repeated the same reasons to Los Angeles newspapermen, but Reverend Boyd Tucker had another story to tell.¹⁶⁰ Apparently the loss of Tagore's passport in Canada had led to some thorough cross-examination by American immigration officials at Vancouver, and the experience had proved to be so unpleasant to Tagore that he did not wish to stay in America any longer than was necessary.

If we remember the glare of publicity under which Tagore had last visited Los Angeles and San Francisco, it will seem strange that the present incident caused hardly a splash in the American press. Perhaps it is an indication of Tagore's then current standing in America that the rest of the country seemed neither to know nor to care about this prematurely terminated visit. The *New York Times*, for example, reported Tagore's departure from Calcutta, alluded to him in an editorial about

157. See *Rabināra-jibani*, III. 349.

158. *Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 1921.

159. *Los Angeles Times*, April 21, 1921.

160. Tucker, an American Methodist missionary, had accompanied Tagore as his secretary for the trip. His statement about the incident, blaming the officials for incivility and colour prejudice, was reported in *Los Angeles Times* and *San Francisco Examiner* of April 21, 1929.

New York noises two days before he reached Canada, then two months later reproduced an interview given by Tagore in Yokohama to American newspapermen—but there is no reference to Tagore's brief sojourn in Los Angeles.¹⁶¹ Even Mrs. Harriet Moody was unaware that anything amiss had taken place, because she “briefly recorded in late April of 1929 : ‘The great Rabindranath Tagore got as far as California this spring, coming across the Pacific. He was said not to be well, and only stayed a short time, going back as he came.’”¹⁶² The last word seemed to have been said in a mild editorial in the *San Francisco Chronicle* which regretted that any untoward thing should have happened to “the gentle Tagore” and hoped that this would not represent “his most comprehensive impression of America.”¹⁶³

Tagore had refused to be drawn out by reporters in America, but was less reserved with newsmen in Japan, and from reports published in the Far East¹⁶⁴ it was clear that whatever may have been the provocation, he had felt it very deeply. It is practically impossible to gauge with any accuracy today the precise nature of what had happened so long ago.¹⁶⁵ Against the possibility of Tagore's having sensed more insult than there was in the situation, we have the American clergyman, Reverend Tucker's denunciation of the behaviour of the immigration officials. And it was not the Immigration Office alone that precipitated Tagore's departure, as can be seen in a letter he wrote to Andrews on the day he left Los Angeles : “.....Yesterday I gave a lecture to a small group of students and some of them sat mopping their faces with powder puffs and some at the end came to shake hands with me. The President, benignly pleased, had a photograph taken later of a group composed of an oriental fool and

161. See issues of February 29, April 4, and June 2, 1929.

162. Dunbar, p. 248.

163. “Hoping for Beauty in Some of Tagore's Memories of America,” April 26, 1929.

164. For full reports, see *Japan Adviser* (Tokyo), May 11, 1929 ; *The Trans-Pacific* (Tokyo), May 16, 1929 ; *China Weekly Review* (Shanghai), May 25, 1929, pp. 532-533 ; *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (Calcutta), April-July 1929, pp. 153-154 ; *Indian Review*, July 1929, pp. 473-478.

165. The latest account is by Stephen Hay, “Tagore in America,” pp. 457-458, in which he refers to an interview he had at Calcutta on July 8, 1960, with Apurbakumar Chanda, who had accompanied Tagore on the 1929 trip to Canada and America.

a member of the Nordic race who always minds his own purpose while the cost is paid by others less favoured by fortune.....This is a fit climax which had its first act in the Immigration Office, Vancouver.”¹⁶⁶

v. The fifth visit : October 9 to December 14, 1930

Seventeen months after his beating a hasty retreat from the west coast, Tagore returned to the United States for his fifth and final visit. “Let me emphasise once more that I bear no antipathy to the American people,” he had said in Tokyo on his way home the previous year.¹⁶⁷ As soon as he arrived in New York this time “he said he wanted it understood that he held no grievance against America in regard to the incident last year.....”¹⁶⁸

To reciprocate the good will, as it were, America did her best to make this visit as successful as possible. A regular “Tagore Reception Committee” was constituted beforehand, with the former United States Ambassador to Turkey, Henry Morgenthau, as Chairman. The press never flagged in its attention to whatever Tagore said or did during the three months he was here. He spoke over the National Broadcasting Corporation radio network. His public appearances in New York drew record-breaking crowds. His bout of illness aroused nationwide sympathy and concern. His presence in the country received its supreme seal of approval when he was granted an audience by President Herbert Hoover.

As evidence of the practically inexhaustible resources of his creative powers, Tagore revealed yet another side of his genius to America this time when he brought along with him over one hundred of his paintings. His career as a painter did not really begin until about 1926 when he was already sixty-five, and he was understandably diffident about his work in this new medium. But the seeming success of his exhibitions in Paris, Berlin, Munich and Moscow during his European tour of 1930 gave him the necessary confidence to bring his work to America

166. Quoted from an extract published for the first time, after Tagore's death, in the introduction of Alex Aronson's book, *op. cit.*, pp. xiv-xv.

167. Interview to *The Trans-Pacific*, *op. cit.*, see note 164 above.

168. *New York Times*, October 10, 1930.

as well. These were exhibited in Boston, New York and Philadelphia, and though they failed to engage the serious attention of art critics,¹⁶⁹ there was no lack of interested viewers.

Another especially noteworthy feature of this visit was that Tagore came to the United States directly from a fifteen-day tour of the Soviet Union. He was tremendously impressed by the Russian achievements that were shown him but it was the contrast between the two countries that struck him more sharply when he came to America again. Writing to Rathindranath from Williamstown, Mass., he said, "My experiences in Russia this time have made me think again deeply about many things. I now see with my own eyes how self-respect may get restricted when surrounded by abundance.....What a burden wealth can become, and how meaningless!"¹⁷⁰ And when questioned by American reporters he spoke so warmly of the Communist regime—especially about the advance of education—that an article appeared labelling him as a Soviet propagandist.¹⁷¹ A month after he left America, an organization of Russian immigrants in New York which called itself the "Circle of Russian Culture," wrote a long letter to the *New York Times* complaining, "By his [Tagore's] evasive attitude toward the Communist grave-diggers of Russia, by the quasi-cordial stand which he has taken toward them, he has lent strong and unjust support to a group of professional murderers."¹⁷² Yet in an interview given while in Russia and published in *Izvestia*, Tagore "had been strongly critical of the Communist system's use of violence and its teaching of intolerance and class-hatred, and had warned against the consequences of these practices and tendencies."¹⁷³

It may be noted in this connection that if Tagore's praise

169. For example, see review by Edward Alden Jewell, *New York Times*, November 30, 1930.

170. Translated. From letter dated October 14, 1930, quoted in *Rabindrajibani*, III, 385.

171. See "Tagore—Russia's Friend," *Literary Digest*, CVII (November 1, 1930), 19.

172. January 15, 1931. :

173. Joseph Dees, *Tagore and America*, p. 28, citing *Izvestia* interview as reprinted in *Manchester Guardian* of October 14, 1930.

of Russia was not well received by the American press, it was viewed with alarm by British authorities in India. Tagore's impressions about Russia were published serially in the Bengali magazine, *Prabashi*, and later collected in a book, *Rasiar chithi* (Calcutta, 1931). As soon as an English translation of one of the articles appeared in the *Modern Review* of September 1931, the Government of Bengal served a notice on the editor not to publish such articles in the future.¹⁷⁴ The prohibition of English translations was a rather ineffective measure, because the Bengali version had already circulated widely among people who probably could not read English anyway.¹⁷⁵

The first announcement of Tagore's visit¹⁷⁶ was made about six months before he actually arrived in New York on October 9, 1930, on the German liner "Bremen," and reporters boarded the ship that evening while it lay in quarantine. With the Round Table Conference to decide India's political future scheduled to be held in London only a month from then, Tagore's views on the Indian situation were eagerly sought. Next day, the *New York Times* reported that Tagore had "scorned the theory of home rule or independence" in the present state of mass illiteracy in India.¹⁷⁷ This provoked a prompt denial from him in a letter to the editor, which is worth quoting in full because it succinctly sets forth his stand on India in unequivocal terms :

I cannot allow to remain uncontradicted some misstatements of my view about the present Indian problem in the report of the interview with me which has appeared in your paper of this morning's issue. Let it be definitely known that according to me it is the opportunity for self-government itself, which gives training for self-government and not foreign subjection, and that an appearance of peace superficially maintained from outside can never lead to real peace, which can only be attained through an inevitable period of suffering and struggle.¹⁷⁸

The mis-reporting of his views could not but have reawakened

174. See *Rabindra-jibani*, III, 386, n. 7.

175. Now available in English as *Letters from Russia* (Calcutta, 1960).

176. *New York Times*, April 1, 1930, p. 64.

177. October 10, 1930, p. 12.

178. October 13, 1930. p. 20.

Tagore's old mistrust of the American press, and his public relations nearly broke down completely the next day, when on arriving at the apartment he was going to use in New York, he was besieged by reporters and photographers and movie cameramen. At first he refused to meet anyone. Clarence Pickett has narrated : "Tagore was rebellious and wholly unwilling to cooperate. I began to discover that, saintly as he was, he was also able to be very positive and vigorous in expressing his disapproval. I tried to explain to him that, since he was hoping to place his cause before the American public, it seemed unwise to completely antagonize both the press and the moving picture industry."¹⁷⁹ Finally, an orderly press conference was organized and Tagore's visit was publicized through the new mass-medium of movie newsreels.

The presence of Clarence Pickett, Executive Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee, to receive Tagore and manage his public relations, consummated nearly ten months of negotiations between this organization and the Indian poet towards making this trip possible. Though the visit had been projected well ahead of time, its materialization was uncertain until the last moment and the actual itinerary had to be changed and curtailed even after Tagore arrived. The fact that his visit was sponsored by the American Friends relieved Tagore of the burden of arranging the mechanics of his stay and travel, while it gave him the moral support of a local body all his previous visits had lacked. As for the Friends it was their "outstanding event in connection with India" for that year's foreign service activities.¹⁸⁰

The archives of the American Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia contain files of correspondence¹⁸¹ through which it is possible to retrace the preliminaries of Tagore's visit. In a letter to the Friends¹⁸² thanking them for sending Dr. Harry Timbres to Santiniketan, Tagore had expressed a desire to get better acquainted with the organization. It was Harry Timbres

179. *For More than Bread* (New York, 1953), p. 92.

180. *Fourteenth Annual Report of the American Friends Service Committee*, p. 6.

181. Referred to from here on as *AFSC Papers*.

182. Copy of letter dated December 18, 1929, from Santiniketan in *AFSC Papers*.

who suggested to Clarence Pickett that the Friends should sponsor a visit to America by Tagore following his 1930 trip to England to deliver the Hibbert Lectures at Oxford. Pickett moved the matter through the Foreign Service Committee, and came to London in May 1930 to meet Tagore and finalize the agreement.¹⁸³ Among the many communications which passed between Timbres and Pickett in the next four months regarding the arrangements of Tagore's visit, there is a particularly interesting letter from Timbres advising Pickett to be careful on two accounts : prevent Indian residents of New York from utilizing Tagore to advance their own interests, and avoid the assistance of American religious organizations who might exploit their association with Tagore in missionary activities in India. As Timbres put it, "The Society of Friends is the only Christian group which he really trusts."¹⁸⁴ Timbres' first apprehension was realized when the India Society of America, an organization of local Indians, let it be known some time in September that it was sponsoring Tagore's visit. However, after a three-way conference between Pickett, representing the Friends, C. F. Andrews, who had arrived as Tagore's vanguard, and Hari Singh Govil of the India Society, it was decided that prime responsibility for the trip remained with the Friends. The India Society contributed their resources to some of the public functions held in Tagore's honour in New York.

In order to supplement the funds necessary to pay the expenses of Tagore's stay in America, the Friends had arranged for Tagore to deliver a few lectures at eastern colleges.¹⁸⁵ After a few days of rest at Williamstown, Mass., where he met Robert Frost,¹⁸⁶ Tagore came to New Haven to give his first lecture on the Yale University campus. But on October 19, he suffered a heart attack that was considered serious enough for all his speaking engagements to be cancelled forthwith.¹⁸⁷ Tagore fretted and fumed under the restricting medical advice, and Prabhatkumar

183. Pickett, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

184. Letter dated June 16, 1930 in *AFSC Papers*.

185. Harvard could not offer any remuneration and was left out of the schedule. See copy of letter from Timbres to Pickett, dated August 29, 1930 in *AFSC Papers*.

186. As mentioned by Frost in a letter to Amiya Chakravarty. See *A Tagore Reader*, p. 392.

187. See *New Haven Journal-Courier*, October 20, 1930.

Mukhopadhyay has conjectured that an exaggerated impression of Tagore's ill-health was given by exaggerated caution and publicity.¹⁸⁸ Tagore was sent to Philadelphia to convalesce at a private home in Lansdowne, Pa. A *New York Times* write-up commiserated with him on his illness and, in reviewing Tagore's achievements, informed that his school at Santiniketan had been set up partly with "aid brought through his wife, an American."¹⁸⁹ This information may have attracted some credence, because about a month later Henry Morgenthau found it necessary to issue a correction.¹⁹⁰

From Philadelphia Tagore came to New York, where he remained for the rest of his visit. New York was far kinder to him this time than it had been during his three months here nine years back. He made only five public appearances in six weeks,¹⁹¹ but each was conspicuously successful. At a more personal level, Tagore made new friends like Will Durant¹⁹² and Rufus Jones,¹⁹³ renewed his acquaintance with Helen Keller and Albert Einstein, and exchanged personal greetings with Sinclair Lewis who had just then joined Tagore on the Nobel Prize award lists. On November 29, Tagore travelled to Washington for the day and was presented to President Herbert Hoover by Sir Ronald Lindsay, the British Ambassador. What passed at this brief meeting was never reported, but Tagore said afterwards that the occasion had been "a delightful one and one that will live in my memory."¹⁹⁴

But in spite of the glamorous banquets, the teeming audiences, and the personal encounters,¹⁹⁵ Tagore was unable to shake off

188. *Rabindra-jibani*, III, 387.

189. October 27, 1930, p. 19.

190. November 23, 1930, sec. ii, p. 1.

191. For reports on these occasions, see *New York Times*, November 20, 1930, p. 23 ; November 26, 1930, p. 2 ; December 2, 1930, p. 28 ; December 8, 1930, p. 12 ; December 15, 1930, p. 5.

192. Durant presented Tagore with a copy of his book, *Case for India* (New York, 1930), and inscribed on it : "You alone are sufficient reason why India should be free."

The book was at that time under a ban in British India, but Tagore wrote a review of it in *Modern Review* of March 1931.

193. Three brief personal letters from Tagore to Jones are among the Rufus-Jones Papers in the Haverford College Library.

194. *New York Times*, November 30, 1930, p. 2.

195. The only friend he was unable to meet was Mrs. Harriet Moody.

the feeling that once again he had become an object of curiosity and spectacle, rather than the subject of thought and self-searching among Americans towards a gradual realization of Tagore's ideals. Neither did he feel encouraged that his more immediate aims—world peace, Indian emancipation, development of Visva-Bharati—were being served, though these had the fullest sympathy of his sponsors. It cannot be mere accident that the subject of his last speech in America should have been "The First and Last Great Prophets of Persia," a subject so far removed from his usual and oft-repeated concerns. It did not seem to matter, either to him or to his audience, what he said.

Apart from one violent attack in a tabloid editorial entitled "The White Man's Burden : And the Brown Man's Racket,"¹⁹⁶ where Tagore was "subjected to abuse and mistreatment of a nature not only repulsive to good taste but also entirely unbecoming,"¹⁹⁷ the local press was content to no more than snipe at him, perhaps conscious of the fact that this was bound to be his last visit. In a discussion of America's low estimate of her own poets in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, it was pointed out that the membership list of the Tagore Reception Committee included names eminent in business and finance, but none of any American poet or even writer. "It is not that Tagore as a poet is actually such an important poet," the columnist went on to comment, "it is the utter absurdity of receiving him formally in New York City without having a single fellow-craftsman on the committee."¹⁹⁸ The *Newark News* made little of Tagore's dismay about the prospects of western civilization, and advised him to look beyond toastmasters and after-dinner speakers to observe the newly found happiness of the American continent.¹⁹⁹ An interviewer of the *New York World* remarked, "For a man so old as he is and so ill, he has been making too many farewell appearances like an attention-loving prima donna who cannot tear herself away from the limelight."²⁰⁰

Because of recently straitened circumstances, she was unable to attend to him this time. See Olivia Dunbar, pp. 259-261.

196. *New York Evening Journal*, December 2, 1930.

197. Aaron Golub, letter to the editor, *New York Telegram*, December 8, 1930.

198. "The Phoenix Next," VII (December 6, 1930), 446.

199. December 7, 1930. Quoted by Alex Aronson, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

200. Harry Salpeter, "Doctor Tagore," December 7, 1930.

It was in the limelight of the Broadway Theater that Tagore appeared to the American public for the last time, when in the last item of a public recital of music, poetry and dance featuring Ruth St. Denis,²⁰¹ Tagore stood on the stage at the centre of a group of dancing children who placed garlands around his neck. As his parting message to America—for once not stated in words—he donated the entire proceeds of the performance to the Mayor's Relief Fund for the unemployed in New York City.²⁰² On the midnight of December 15, 1930, he left America for the last time.

One direct result of Tagore's final visit was the formation of the American Tagore Association, whose purpose would be "to cooperate culturally and financially with Dr. Tagore's University in Bengal, India."²⁰³ The groundwork for this was laid by Harry Timbres, working through the American Friends, and the association was formally launched on the poet's seventieth birthday, May 6, 1931.²⁰⁴ Tagore sent a message, which was also his final tribute to America, a handsome testament that will perhaps be remembered long after his criticisms of this country have been forgotten. Here he expressed his fondest hope : "The quest of spiritual realization which distinguishes America today.....is sure to reveal itself in a new civilization in which Europe will be reborn, freed of its discordant inhibitions and heritages of dead past.....the vitality of a forward marching idealism will find its perfection assimilating the true gifts of the East as well as the West in the unity of the human spirit."²⁰⁵ Americans were no less generous with their tribute, as may be seen in the messages and greetings published in *The Golden Book of Tagore*, the volume presented to Tagore on his seventieth birthday in 1931.²⁰⁶ The twenty-three Americans contributions²⁰⁷

201. See *New York Times*, December 14, 1930, p. 10.

202. See *New York Times*, December 15, 1930, p. 5.

203. *New York Times*, March 25, 1931, p. 51.

204. See *New York Times*, May 7, 1931, p. 26. Some phrases from the birthday message are reproduced here.

205. Quoted from extracts reproduced in Martin C. Carroll's address, "Ambassador Extraordinary to America," published in *Tribute to Tagore*, (Bombay, 1961), pp. 47-50.

206. Copies of this rare publication are in the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, the University of Pennsylvania Library, the University of Chicago Library.

207. Among them were Theodore Dreiser, Will Durant, Gertrude Emerson,

vary in size—a single line message from Sinclair Lewis, a page of praise from Jane Addams, an essay-length discussion by John Haynes Holmes—but they prove that Tagore had never lacked appreciation among individual and distinguished Americans.

Tagore was to address America once more before he died. In June 1940, he sent a cable directly to President Roosevelt, reminding this country of her responsibility towards stemming “the tide of evil that has menaced the permanence of our civilization.”²⁰⁸ As Stephen Hay has pointed out,²⁰⁹ at this moment of world crisis Tagore did not distinguish between “Western civilization” and “Eastern civilization” as he had been wont to do for so long, but appealed simply on behalf of all humanity in the phrase “our civilization.” He died a month before Pearl Harbor, and thus never knew what America would do to rescue this civilization.

The numerous editorials and obituary articles that appeared in America after Tagore’s death on August 7, 1941, are evidence of the remarkable variety of ways this country could look back upon this man and his work.²¹⁰ Memories of how he had condemned the West vied with conviction that he had established permanent ties with the West. Some remembered him as a dreamer, while others could see in the world of 1941 how some of Tagore’s apprehensions had come true. Nobody denied him greatness, but there was uncertainty about where this greatness lay.

A memorial service was held for him on the afternoon of August 17, 1941, at Grace Church in New York, under the auspices of the World Fellowship of Faiths. The need for such fellowship had been one of Tagore’s constant reminders to the world.

Helen Keller, Harriet Monroe, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Upton Sinclair, Louis Untermeyer.

208. Full text of the cable in *New York Times*, June 16, 1940, p. 32.

209. “Tagore in America,” p. 461.

210. For example, see editorials in *New York Times*, August 8, 1941 ; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 8, 1941 ; *Washington Post*, August 9, 1941.

Also see articles in *Saturday Review*, XXIV (August 16, 1941), 14 ; *Time*, XXXVIII (August 18, 1941), 47 ; *Newsweek*, XVIII (August 18, 1941), 6 ; *Christian Century*, LVIII (August 20, 1941), 1022-24 ; *Nation*, CLIII (September 6, 1941), 205.

PART TWO

TAGORE'S LITERARY WORK IN AMERICA

Rabindranath Tagore appeared to America as a "representative man." In trying to fulfil the obligation of such a status, his primary role as a creative artist steadily diminished to a point where his importance as an international symbol obliterated his achievements as a writer. The symbolic significance of Tagore was necessarily circumscribed by the conditions which were satisfied by the symbol. His permanent value is not so much in what he represented as in what he actually was. What he actually was is unalterably recorded in his writings, and it is there that the essential Tagore must be searched.

When Tagore's literary work first became available in America, he had been writing for at least thirty-five years in Bengali and had to his credit over one hundred publications varying in size from the slender musical drama *Valmiki pratibha* to a full length novel like *Gora*. Much of his translation work from 1912 onward consisted, therefore, of selections from previously published work. At the other end of the scale, his last work to be published in America (excluding his *Collected Poems and Plays*) appeared just after his last visit to this country. He lived for another ten years after this, wrote as prolifically as before, and published about seventy more volumes. Not many translations from this period were done by him, all were published in India, and very little of it seems to have been available in America during the rest of his life. Tagore's "American" career, therefore, occupies about twenty years between the first appearance of *Gitanjali* and its author's last departure from New York.

Tagore was introduced to America as a writer. Championed by a great modern poet like W. B. Yeats and by Ezra Pound, a maker of modern literary taste, the success of Tagore's career in English should have been insured forever. But neither was an influential force in American letters then, and Tagore was

soon to lose the advantage of their advocacy. Between them, however, they gave Tagore a literary prominence that the Indian poet could never have achieved on his own. Yet that prominence was nothing compared to the celebrity gained by Tagore within a year of his first emergence in the West when he won the Nobel Prize. Although intended as a recognition of outstanding literary merit, the award was interpreted in various ways having nothing to do with literature. However true the other implications may have been, their sum total militated against the original intention of the award. In paying tribute to a writer of great poetry, the prize magnified him into an emblem of greater issues. It was prologue to the swelling act of a worldwide theme in which Tagore's role as writer became submerged. Hailing him on the one hundredth anniversary of his birth as "Ambassador Extraordinary to America," Martin C. Carroll¹ reaffirmed the office imposed upon Tagore at the outset of his literary career in English.

The possibility of counteracting this ambassadorial reputation lay in his books, produced and publicized so effectively by his publishers. As they appeared in America, however, they never kept tune with the American writing that was being published at the same time. Tagore's advent happened to coincide with America's "coming of age" in literature as in other things, and at no point did his writings share common ground with the current American literature. This may be seen very simply in the pages of *Poetry* magazine, where Tagore first appeared in December 1912, Vachel Lindsay in January 1913, Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg during 1914, and "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" in June 1915. Similarly, in fiction, Tagore's *The Home and the World* (1919) was published the same year as Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), to be followed, by Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* (1920) and Dos Passos' *Three Soldiers* (1921). Tagore's last collection of stories *Broken Ties and Other Stories* (1926) appeared when the Hemingway era was about to begin with *In Our Time* (1925) and *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). If the essential critical controversy in America between 1910 and 1925 lay between "neo-classicists" like Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More, and "radicals" like

1. In his address to the All-India Bengali Literary Conference in Bombay, January 1-3, 1961. Published in *Tribute to Tagore*, pp. 47-50.

Van Wyck Brooks and H. L. Mencken and others, Tagore's work had little to offer to either side. This is revealed in the fact that very few reputed American critics of the time came to write anything about Tagore. The so-called "defenders of ideality" of the previous era might have found Tagore worthy of critical concern, but at the present time Tagore remained outside the main currents of American literature.

He was the first Indian writer to seriously engage American attention, and it was but inevitable that he should fall foul of American preconceptions about the Indian past and American speculations about the Indian future, to be regarded as a Hindu evangelist in one light and as a political missionary in the other. Some of his books, belonging as they do outside the pale of creative writing, contributed to the blurring of his image as a literary artist. At their worst were volumes like *Stray Birds* (1916) or *Fireflies* (1928), which do not conform to any acceptable literary genre and would have been suitable vehicles of expression for somebody who had neither the talent nor the reputation of being a creative writer. At another extreme were the collections of addresses and essays—like *Sadhana* (1913) or *Creative Unity* (1922)—which sometimes attracted more attention than the literary works, because these dealt with ideological concepts and lent themselves more easily to general discussion. Here again, Tagore as an idealist thinker had arrived amid the most adverse circumstances. The history of ideas in America during this period may be described broadly as a tide of anti-idealism, inaugurated by William James and furthered by thinkers like George Santayana and John Dewey. It is possible to approach² Tagore's thought as a striving for the "more" conceived by William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). But here James was concerned with resolving the conflict between spiritual faith and scientific knowledge, whereas Tagore's pronouncements were based on the confirmation of his spiritual faith by personal experience and he never denied the efficacy of science in its grasp of non-spiritual truths. In any case, Tagore was not a philosopher dealing with pure ideas, but an artist whose intellectual inheritance consisted of a body of

2. As suggested by Sisirkumar Ghose in his introduction, *The Later Poems of Tagore*, p. 14.

thought where religion and philosophy are inseparable. Rather than pursue the intricacies of Upanishadic doctrine at work in Tagore, it is more profitable to reach his ideas through his creative writing.

The distraction away from Tagore's literary work was confirmed and perpetuated with every visit he made to America. *Sadhana* is as much a record of his first visit as *Nationalism* is of his second. Except when he gave readings from his own work, his lectures in America had little to do with his concerns as a writer. The rare "What is Art?" lecture on the 1916-17 tour and "The Poet's Religion" lecture on the 1920-21 tour were about the only two themes in which he could be said to have dealt with these concerns. In other words, to the American public he appeared most often as a religious philosopher or as a political theorist or as an idealistic internationalist, but very seldom as writer or artist. Even when he was professedly campaigning for the Santiniketan school or the Visva-Bharati university, he spoke about the *ashramic* ideal of education or the concept of universal culture, rather than on specific aims and objectives of these institutions to which he gave more than half his life's work and all his life's earnings. His natural identity as a man of letters and his achieved identity as a practical educationist—identities which would have been readily recognized in America—were buried under the vast generalities of his lecture topics.

The books should have helped to restore the imbalance but they did not. Tagore's publishers are often blamed for publishing too much of Tagore too soon, but Tagore himself must be held responsible for not clearly visualizing his career in English as something which needed to be arranged according to a definite plan to present his work abroad in the most favourable manner. Perhaps misled by the popular success of his first few volumes, he seemed to have permitted the publication of anything that had been translated. Never very selective about publication of his Bengali work, he has been unusually uncritical with regard to the translations. His *Collected Poems and Plays*, reissued for the seventh time in 1961, very clearly reveals the uncertain view he had of himself as an English writer. It does not contain all his poems and plays in English, but since the volume has no preface or introduction or notes, we shall never know the criterion of selection. The dates of

publication of separate works are not given, and the order of their appearance in the volume does not follow their sequence of publication chronology. Though many of the weaker poems have been eliminated, two patently unrepresentative works like *The Crescent Moon* and *Stray Birds* have been retained. Finally, there is no indication anywhere in this volume that the author ever wrote anything in any other language but English. Perhaps therein lies the real clue to the very limited success of Tagore's English career—to the end he was undecided whether he should be treated, quite detached from his Bengali work, as a writer in the English language.

Tagore is probably the only poet of any standing in the world who has translated his own poetry to win unusual acclaim in another language. As a literary phenomenon, *Gitanjali* has no equal in poetic literature. But its very uniqueness has been gravely detrimental to the rest of Tagore's English career. He never recaptured that first, fine, careful rapture, and gave up the struggle after several less successful attempts. About the time he had put together the last collection, *The Fugitive*, he wrote to Edward Thompson: "When I began this career of falsifying my own coins I did it in play. Now I am becoming frightened of its enormity and am willing to make a confession of my misdeeds and withdraw into my original vocation as a mere Bengali poet. I hope it is not yet too late to make reparation....."³

The foundation of such reparation may be laid by estimating how much of Tagore is represented in English translation. In the period under review, Tagore's work reached the American reader largely in four literary forms—poetry, drama, novels and short stories—and in a miscellaneous variety of prose. The main task of the second part of this dissertation will be to place Tagore's work as available in America against the background of his total work in Bengali, in order to define the outlines of Tagore the writer as considered through his writings. For the sake of convenience, the phrase "Tagore's English career" has been used to refer to the body of his work available in English translation during this period. His work

3. Letter dated February 2, 1921. Quoted in *Rabindranath Tagore : Poet and Dramatist* (1948), p. 264.

has been translated into many other languages of the world,⁴ and more English translations have been published since 1941, but these are outside our chosen area of discussion here.

It may be relevant to suggest possible approaches for the American reader to Tagore by comparing his work with some American writing in that particular genre. This is a comparatively unexplored realm, although Tagore has been compared with outstanding writers of practically every other country in the world. It is usual to consider Tagore's creative achievement, especially in poetry, as a remote extension of the literature of England, and it used to be a critical pastime in India to trace influences in Tagore from every English poet up to Swinburne. Tagore's own allusions to his reading of English poetry gave the lead to such research. There is, however, very little evidence of Tagore's reading of American literature, except for casual remarks here and there. This makes it easier to suggest comparisons with American writers without becoming involved in the intricate question of influences.

Critical commentary on Tagore in English, except when written by Bengali-knowing Indians, is generally based on Tagore's English works. This limitation applies to non-Bengali Indians writing about Tagore in English as well as to foreigners. Only three foreigners who have written at any length on Tagore had the pre-requisite knowledge of Bengali to read him in the original. The first of them, Edward Thompson, published his *Rabindranath Tagore : Poet and Dramatist* in 1926, and though a revised edition appeared in 1948, the main discussion remains confined to Tagore's pre-1926 work. Vincenc Lesny's book, *Rabindranath Tagore : His Personality and Work*, appeared in English translation in 1939, but this contains little by way of literary criticism. The third foreigner is another Czech scholar, Dusan Zbavitel of the Oriental Institute at Prague. He has published a series of critical studies in the *Archiv Orientalni*,⁵ dealing with Tagore's work in chronolo-

4. The *Tagore Centenary Exhibition* (1961) bibliography lists translations in fourteen Indian languages, nine other Asian languages, and thirty-six West European and Slavic languages.

5. "Rabindranath Tagore in 1887-1891," XXIV (1956), 581-590 ; "Rabindranath Tagore in 1891-1905," XXV (1957), 405-425 ; "Rabindranath Tagore in 1905-1913," XXVI (1958), 101-113 ; "Rabindranath Tagore in

gical phases, relating the man to his moment and milieu. Apart from these, Tagore criticism in English is mostly to be found in short articles in periodicals and special publications. The Indian Academy of Letters has compiled a valuable selection of essays on numerous aspects of Tagore's life and work in its anniversary offering, *A Centenary Volume* (1961).

Through out the next four chapters, original titles from Tagore's work have been distinguished by asterisks in order to avoid confusion with English titles. The notes in the standard edition of Tagore's complete works in Bengali, the twenty-six volume *Rabindra-rachanavali* (Calcutta, 1939-48 ; latest issue, 1961),⁷ have been cited and literal translations given when necessary. All textual references to the English works are from the first editions, especially to the verse, because the *Collected Poems and Plays* (1937 ; latest issue, 1961) omits many pieces which appeared in the original publications.

1913-1930," XXVI (1958), 366-384 ; "Rabindranath Tagore in 1930-1937," XXVII (1959), 60-75 ; "Rabindranath Tagore in 1937-1941," XXVII (1959), 251-271.

7. The set owned by the University of Pennsylvania Library is perhaps the only set available in the United States. A large number of Tagore's individual works in Bengali are in the Yale University Library.

CHAPTER SIX

POETRY

Tagore's poetry is available in English in three separate categories—the six volumes published abroad between 1912 and 1921, containing his own translations ; his other translations which appeared regularly in Indian periodicals during his lifetime and were published in India in a single volume after his death ;¹ and translations done by others. The last category would include books on Tagore in which the authors have used some of their own translations², some translated poems published while Tagore was alive,³ and several volumes of poetry published in translation afterwards. Numerous translations of single poems are in existence, and many appeared during the Tagore centenary year in memorial publications.⁴

The first category above is our main concern here, because Tagore's reputation as a poet in English rest on these six volumes. A discussion of Tagore's poetry based on this portion of his work is beset by three major handicaps. Firstly, the fame and adulation enjoyed by *Gitanjali* has resulted in this volumes being treated as Tagore's best and most representative work as poet. Consequently, other aspects of his poetry have

1. *Poems*, ed. Krishna Kripalani (Calcutta, 1942). All but the last twelve translations are Tagore's own.

2. As in books by B. K. Roy, Edward Thompson, Vincenc Lesny, A. C. Bose, and Sisir Kumar Ghose.

3. These were:

The Curse at Farewell, trans. Edward Thompson (London, 1924), *Rabindranath Tagore* (Augustan Books of Modern Poetry Series), trans. Edward Thompson (London, 1925) ; *Sheaves*, trans. Nagendranath Gupta (Allahabad, India, 1929 ; New York, 1932) ; *The Golden Boat*, trans. Bhabani Bhattacharya (London, 1932).

4. See *A Tagore Reader* (1961) ; *Cultural Forum* (Tagore Number : November, 1961) ; *Indian Literature*, IV (Tagore Number, 1961).

been neglected. Secondly, all these volumes are not very selective anthologies, with the selection in each favouring one volume or another from Tagore's Bengali work. Also, the order of publication of the English volumes does not have any relation to the sequence of composition in the original, so that no idea of Tagore's poetic development may be gathered from the translations. Thirdly, in making the translations, Tagore took so many liberties with the original that often a poem becomes rewritten rather than merely translated.⁶ Generally he abridged or modified the original poems,⁷ and occasionally made some changes. Some are only partial translations of the original, while parts of the same original have some times been used to produce two separate poems in translation.⁸ In a few cases, two or three original poems have been fused into a single translation.⁹ The earlier volumes in particular contain a number of poems which are almost new poems using old material, and yet they are not so detached from their source as to merit consideration as distinct entities.

Had Tagore translated his own poems literally and faithfully, it would have been easier to judge the original work through the translations. The near-translation he preferred has been the greatest hindrance to proper evaluation of Tagore as poet, on the basis of his own translations in the period under review. He was not unaware of the difference between the originals and his English versions, because we find him writing to Rothenstein a few months before *Gitanjali* was first

5. Besides Edward Thompson and Dusan Zbavital, for discussions in English about Tagore's poetry, see :

D. P. Mukherji, *Tagore—A Study* (Bombay, 1943), Ch. iii.

Buddhadeva Bose, *An Acre of Green Grass* (Calcutta, 1948), Ch. i.

S. C. Sen Gupta, *The Great Sentinel* (Calcutta, 1948), Chs. iv-vii.

Hiranmay Banerjee, *How Thou Singest, My Master !* (Calcutta, 1961).

6. See editor's note, *Poems*, pp. 217-218, for a line-by-line analysis of a translation as compared to the original.

7. Compare *The Gardener* : LXII with the original "Swapna" (*Kalpna**) ; or *Lover's Gift* : I with "Shah-jahan" (*Balaka**) ; or, *The Fugitive* : 1-17 with "Sonar tari" (*Sonar tari**).

8. For example, *Fruit-Gathering* : LXXV renders only the first half of *Utsarga* : 7*. The second half was later rendered as no. 28, *Poems*.

9. For example, *Gitanjali*, XXXIX combines nos. 5 and 6 from *Naivedya*.*

published in England, "I send you some more of my poems rendered into English. They are far too simple to bear the strain of translation but I know you will understand them through their faded meanings."¹⁰ A letter to Harriet Moody from Urbana next year mentions : "Rathi has begun typing my poems—I won't call them translations."¹¹ And, after returning to India, he wrote to Harriet Monroe : "I have been polishing the English versions of some of my narrative poems since we last met. I find it difficult to impart to them the natural vigour of the original poems."¹² All three statements are admissions of the necessity he felt to do something more than—or other than—merely translate. The result was an indeterminate middle-territory between translation and recreation that characterizes all of Tagore's poetry in English. The typical features of this borderland were confirmed in the books that followed *Gitanjali* and these features were obviously coloured by the success of that volume.

Gitanjali dominates Tagore's English career and reputation abroad to such an extent that it requires some special consideration.¹³ The translations were begun to while away idle hours of convalescence during March-April of 1912, and continued during the long leisure of his voyage to England that year. As he explained later to his niece, Indira, "I did not undertake this task in a spirit of reckless bravery ; I simply felt an urge to recapture, through the medium of another language, the feeling and sentiments which had created such a feast of joy within me in past days."¹⁴ He repeated this explanation on another occasion : "I was possessed by the pleasure of receiving anew my feelings as expressed in a foreign language. I was making fresh acquaintance with my own heart by dressing it in other clothes."¹⁵ What he never explained was why he should have

10. Letter dated June 7, 1912, from London, *Papers WR*, no. 1.

11. Letter dated March 6, 1913, among the papers of Harriet Moody in the University of Chicago archives.

12. Letter dated December 31, 1913, from Calcutta, *HM Collection*.

13. Fifty editions in English and at least thirty-four translations in other languages have appeared so far.

14. Letter dated May 6, 1913, from London. extract reproduced as "Genesis of *Gitanjali*," *A Tagore Reader*, pp. 20-21.

15. Translated. From essay, "Stopford Brooke," *Rabindra rachana*.

selected the Bengali *Gitanjali* in particular to render into English out of eighteen other volumes of verse he had published until then. The *Gitanjali* pieces were, of course, from his most recent work, and how deeply they absorbed him may be seen from his repeated assertions to Rothenstein from Urbana—"I can assure you they are not literary productions at all, they are life productions.....,"¹⁶ and, "These poems.....are very different from other literary productions of the kind. They are revelations of my true self to me. The literary man was a mere amanuensis [sic], "¹⁷ and again, "These writings have not come from a person who tried to appropriate to himself all the prize and the remunerations of authorship. It was a different personality which sang these songs....."¹⁸

The English *Gitanjali* was subtitled "Song-offerings," which is a literal translation of the title as well as a description of the contents, and this fact is often overlooked by those who treat these compositions purely as poetry. The English version includes fifty-one pieces from the original *Gitanjali* which was published in September 1910 containing "157 songs and poems..... not all songs, 56 have been set to tune and the remaining 81 are poems or songs not yet set to tune."¹⁹ Twenty more had already been published as songs and were included here. This explains why the original work has never been rated high as poetry by Bengalis, yet circulated widely among them and became memorable by virtue of their melodic quality. It also explains why Tagore should have chosen to begin with these and not any other of his work for rendering into English. As songs their essential simplicity, of form as well as of content, was pliable material for translation even if the melody was omitted. Buddhadeva Bose stated this very aptly in his comment : "The Song Offerings are more of song in the original and more of an offering in the English."²⁰

In today's perspective, when we can observe Tagore's career

navali, XXVI, 528. The complete works have been cited from here on as *Rachanavali*.

16. Letter dated December 12, 1912, *Papers WR*, no. 17.

17. Letter dated December 30, 1912, *Papers WR*, no. 20.

18. Letter dated January 6, 1913, *Papers WR*, no. 21.

19. Translated. From *Rabindra-jibani*, II, 247-248.

20. *An Acre of Green Grass*, p. 3.

as a whole, we see that the peculiarly important place in it occupied by the original *Gitanjali* makes it a natural choice for Tagore to have paused and lingered over, to the extent of attempting to re-create the mood again in translation. This significant location would also apply to two other collections of songs from the same period, *Gitimalya** (1914) and *Gitali** (1914). These three books of "song-poems" constitute perhaps the only phase of reconciled calm in the otherwise long and disturbed course of Tagore's poetry.²¹ The peace that passeth understanding which we find reflected in the English *Gitanjali* did not come to Tagore overnight, but was a resolution of forces that had been in operation for a long time. Only by overlooking all that preceded it can *Gitanjali* be regarded as a sudden, mystical achievement, born of some mindless joy and without any basis in reason.²² The poetry that came after is further argument against treating him as the possessor of some highly subjective and beatific vision. To praise Tagore as the poet of inspired joy—as he was praised abroad—is misleading, because the joy here is of self-realization, not of self-indulgence. And the intellectual basis of *Gitanjali** is not to be found in the few essays of *Sadhana* but in the long series of discourses published under the title *Santiniketan*²³ which have not been extensively translated.

We can use Tagore's own words to name the essential conflict in his poetry up to the time of *Gitanjali**. He stated in a letter : "I do not really know which is more powerful within me, a love that is replete with happiness as well as misery, the joy of meetings and the pain of partings, or a desire to roam without definite direction in search of beauty. I think the desire for beauty is spiritual, indifferent to home and humanity, directed towards the formless. And the love is of the order of man, concerned with that which has form. One is Shelley's skylark, the other Wordsworth's skylark."²⁴ This statement determines

21. This view has been thoroughly discussed by the Bengali critic, Pramathanath Bishi, in his *Rabindra-sarani* (Calcutta), 1961, Ch. x.

22. For representative expression of this view, see Edward G. Gilbert-Cooper, "An Oriental Optimist," *Westminster Review*, CLXXX (December 1913), 660-665.

23. Collected in *Rachanavali*, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI. A summary of principal concepts is given in *Rabindra-ijibani*, ii, 206-227.

24. Translated. From *Chithiptra*, v, quoted by Pramathanath Bishi, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

the two poles between which Tagore's poetry had travelled back and forth for over thirty years, until a resolution was reached in the *Gitanjali** period. The three worlds of Tagore's universe—man, nature, and divinity—were brought together in an indissoluble relationship only in these song-poems.

Tagore's entire poetic career may be divided chronologically into six periods. The first, 1878 to 1886, is his period of apprenticeship, and is chiefly a period of self-exploration. The young poet handles his instrument confidently but is uncertain of his role as poet, and is unable to venture out of what has been called his "wilderness of the heart." Some account of this period is to be found in *My Reminiscences*, but little evidence from the poems themselves is to be found among the translations. The second period, 1886-1900, is richly diverse and reveals a burgeoning of poetic achievement in which at least three directions are clearly discernible—an awareness of the immediate human world, ranging from the erotic to the political ; an approach to external nature as the means of communication to some greater reality beyond ; a sense of historical imagination which reviews India's past to find precedent and inspiration for the present. Scattered samples of the poetry of this period may be seen in the English volumes. The third period, 1901 to 1914, has the poet withdrawing within himself to realize and revel in his sense of union with divinity. The English *Gitanjali* fully represents this, and at least two other volumes of translation are drawn from this period. The fourth period, 1916 to 1932, briefly represented in translation, is another spell of versatile creation like the second though not so productive in volume. In Tagore's Bengali career it marks something like a rebirth, not only of his poetry but of his whole literary life. The last two periods, 1932-36 and 1938-41, take us outside our purview here and is a phase of Tagore's career that is least adequately represented in translation even now.

Only the third period is embodied in the English *Gitanjali*, the bulk of which is drawn from the Bengali volume with the same title. Three other sources are *Naivedya** (1901), *Kheya** (1906) and *Gitimalya** (1914), all belonging to the same period. The *Naivedya** poems mark the opening of the new phase, because here onwards the various concerns of the poet are steadily gathered up into the single service of divinity that is to become the sole

concern in the poems at the end of the period. For example, the *Naivedya** poem which became the well-known *Gitanjali* piece, XXXV, shows the merging of a nationalistic sentiment into a much larger prayer for an ideal world. The *Kheya** poems are like a bridge between the institutionalized religion of Tagore's earlier poetry and a more purely personal God who is to be approached in various ways guided by the poet's own instincts. The "King", for example, is a recurring symbol, and a phrase from the *Kheya** poem rendered as *Gitanjali* : LI was later adapted as title for the play, *The King of the Dark Chamber*. *Gitimalya** contributed the famous opening poem of *Gitanjali*—"Thou hast made me endless, such is they pleasure"—and sixteen other pieces. The original *Gitimalya** was published after the English *Gitanjali* was, so that some of its songs appeared first in a book in their English versions and many were written during Tagore's stay abroad in 1912-13. Essentially similar in motivation, the *Gitimalya** songs are more confident and unreserved, addressing divinity with greater familiarity than the gently submissive *Gitanjali** songs. Together they give the English *Gitanjali* that air of achieved communion with divinity which was the principal reason of its initial success.

Gitanjali ran into twelve reprints before the Nobel Prize was awarded to Tagore and there is no dubting the very real excitement it caused purely as the literary work of an unknown author. But its effect on Tagore's own later work and reputation abroad was almost uniformly injurious. *

For example, it seems to have persuaded him that the devotional aspect of his poetry was the aspect most suitable for translation and most accessible to foreign appreciation. As J. C. Ghosh has put it, "he dug overmuch along that particular seam, producing a monotonously one-sided impression of his work."²⁵ Even when he was rendering non-devotional poetry into English, his turn of phrase invariably inclined towards supra-human connotations. The more substantial side of his poetical work—the landscapes and seascapes of first-hand observation, the social problems and political dilemma of the time, the poetry of abstract thought, the questions about the nature of poetry—these he avoided altogether or presented in a diluted,

unrecognizable form. As with his choice of material, so with his mode of translation he relied more and more on the *Gitanjali* manner, excising from the original poems words and ideas which could not be treated thus. In their place, he either substituted terms which he thought would be familiar to Western understanding or introduced new elements to aid such understanding. Edward Thompson complained long ago that "his treatment of his Western public has sometimes amounted to an insult to their intelligence. He has carefully selected such simple, sweet things as he appears to think they can appreciate."²⁶ Tagore himself gave this reason to his Argentinian admirer, Victoria Ocampo, who had noticed this difference between a verbal, line by line translation done by Tagore and the later written English version. She writes, "I reproached him, 'Why did you suppress them? They were the center, the heart of the poem?' He replied he thought *that* would not interest Westerners.....;" and from this she concludes "Tagore had doubts as to the Westerner's capacity of understanding Eastern thoughts."²⁷ This becomes more apparent in his later books where the meaning has been made so simple in each translation that no intellectual residue is left to engage the reader's mind. Meanwhile, the manner came to be treated as a mannerism and became easy target for parodyists.²⁸

As for the effect of *Gitanjali* on his reputation, what was essentially a secondary feature in his original poetry and a temporary condition of his Bengali career, became the primary element and permanent recognition of his fame abroad.²⁹ The word 'mystic' was used as a portmanteau term to embrace all that was unique in *Gitanjali*, making it unnecessary to inquire into the poetic antecedents that made *Gitanjali* possible or to require intellectual commitments on Tagore's part that could be answered in the poems. There was no detailed examination of the poetry itself to demonstrate mystical concepts,³⁰ but the term 'mystic'

26. *Rabindranath Tagore, His Life and Work* (Calcutta, 1921.), p. 49.

27. "Tagore on the Banks of the River Plate," *A Centenary Volume*, pp. 27-47.

28. See parody by Maynard quoted in his article in *Common weal*, XXXIV, 463.

29. See Sybil Baumer, *Introduction to Rabindranath Tagore's Mysticism*, (London, n.d.).

30. Such examination came later, as in A. Yusuf Ali, "The Religion

was freely used to describe all his work. It was the most convenient description of a new phenomenon, and in the years before the outbreak of this century's first great disillusionment, mysticism was not as alien to Western speculation as it may seem now.³¹ Speaking on John Dryden at an annual lecture at Newnham College (Cambridge, England) in November 1913, Professor Walter Raleigh remarked about contemporary taste in poetry : "The poetry of today has many kinds of excellence, but they are all remote from the excellence of Dryden.....We are fanciful, decorative, conceited, mystical ; we find no difficulty with the jewelled raptures of Francis Thompson or the vague ecstasies of Rabindranath Tagore."³² Afterwards, with the additional evidence of Tagore's public lectures and published essays, attempts were made to resolve Tagore's mysticism into a religion or a philosophy.³³ But in the absence of a strongly defined system of thought, the mysticism of *Gitanjali* has remained a presiding concept for those who read him in English. Instead of being only an introduction abroad to his work, the volume became a yardstick of all that came afterwards, especially of his poetry.

Tagore seems to have sensed the dangers in this reputation for Oriental mysticism, because in his next volume he announced : "Most of the lyrics of love and life, the translations of which from Bengali are published in this book, were written much earlier than the series of religious poems contained in the book *Gitanjali*."³⁴ The emphasis here is on the phrase "lyrics of love and life," and the selection in *The Gardener* (1913) refers almost exclusively to the second period of his career, 1886 to 1900.

of Rabindranath Tagore", *Essays by Divers Hands*, Vol. x (London, 1930), or in A. C. Bose, *Three Mystic Poets* ((1945), ch. iii.

31. A recent study of occult doctrines in Western literature may be seen in John Senior, *The Way Down and Out : The Occult in Symbolist Literature* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1959).

32. *Some Authors* (London, 1923), pp. 156-157.

On the popularity of mystical literature at the time, see : Leslie Johnston, "Modern Mysticism : Some Prophets and Poets", (rev. article), *Quarterly Review*, CCXX (January 1914), 220-246.

May Sinclair, *A Defence of Idealism : Some Questions and Conclusions* (London, 1917).

33. See below, chapter nine.

34. Preface, *The Gardener*.

His biographer tells us that Tagore had prepared this volume as a counter-measure to the effect of *Gitanjali*, and as an avowal that "he was a poet and not a guru."³⁵ At the same time Tagore was a little anxious that these poems may not have translated as well as the devotional songs.³⁶

In his Bengali career, this period opened with *Kari o komal** (1886), whose introductory poem is practically a manifesto, announcing "This world is sweet,—I do not want to die./I wish to dwell in the ever-living life of man."³⁷ This wish evolved tirelessly for the next fourteen years and went into the poems of nine volumes, of which at least six are represented in *The Gardener*. *Chitra** (1896) gave the opening poem, from which the volume takes its title, when the devoted servant is granted his appeal—"Make me the gardener of your flower garden." The garden is the poetic universe of Tagore's youth, and a large variety of blooms is displayed here by the gardener. Love poems and poems about love abound, a large proportion of them drawn from *Kalpana** (1900) and *Kshanika** (1900). The former is full of rather literary love,³⁸ sedate and ornate with classical allusions and conventions, in contrast to the latter's wide range from lighthearted fancy³⁹ to love's extreme despair.⁴⁰ The twenty-five *Kshanika** pieces are among the best poems in this book and they lend it their distinctive tone. From *Sonar tari** (1896) comes XII with its extended conceit, as well as XXVIII where love mourns an inability to express itself ; also from the same source are the parables of VI and LXVI which have nothing to do with love. LXXVII, from *Chaitali** (1896), is another departure from the main theme and a good example of Tagore's ability to record a mood pictorially. This may be compared to the wholly different achievement in LXVII, where an atmosphere of apprehension is built up without any visual detail. The few pieces from *Utsarga** (1914)⁴¹ are from outside this period and do not really

35. Translated. From *Rabindra-jibani*, ii, 335.

36. See letter to Ramananda Chatterji quoted in *Rabindra-jibani*, ii, 335, n. 1.

37. Quoted by Tagore, *My Reminiscences*, p. 267.

38. See *The Gardener*, XXXII, LXII.

39. *Ibid.*, XI, XLVI.

40. *Ibid.*, XXXVIII, LV, LVI.

41. For example, V, XV, LXXXVI.

belong here in time or in spirit. Incidentally, the poem which opens with the line "In the dusky path of a dream I went to see the love who was mine in a former life,"⁴² was included by Yeats in the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* and a critic has conjectured that Yeats may have based his own "An Image from a Past Life" (*Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, 1920) upon the image from the Tagore poem.⁴³ Another piece, LXVI, which Tagore rendered into English from a *Sonar tari** poem, later underwent another incarnation when it provided the verbal basis for a symphony by the Czech composer, Leos Janacek.⁴⁴

Tagore's main purpose of offering something very different from the song-offerings of *Gitanjali* was served here. But compared to the lavish texture of the originals, the translations in *The Gardener* lack in depth and substance. For this the translator alone must take full responsibility. Guided solely by the criterion of clarity, he has reconstructed the originals in their new form with the mere props of meaning. Everything that is complex or intense in the original has been skipped over, and large portions have been sacrificed, for the sake of simple rendering. What remains is a bare framework of plain and short sentences, without much substance between them. This is especially true of the English versions of the longer Bengali poems, and most of them look like first drafts rather than finished products. The *Gitanjali* selection lost little by diminution in translation, but in the present selection there was need as well as opportunity for elaborating his technique of translation. All that Tagore proved in the second volume was that his poetic concerns were more varied than the first volume had suggested. There was little proof of what he could achieve along these other concerns. The whole of *The Gardner* leaves a pleasant impression, but there are no memorable pieces in it.

The Crescent Moon (1913) followed immediately after, and was a grievous mistake from which Tagore's reputation abroad as a serious poet never really recovered. It is strange that he

42. *Ibid.* LXII.

43. See Richard Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats*, p. 257.

44. See Josef Lowenback, "Rabindranath Tagore and Leos Janacek," *New Orient*, II (June 1961), 68-70.

Another version of this article appears as "Leos Janacek and Rabindranath Tagore," *A Centenary Volume* (1961), pp. 159-162.

was not advised against publishing something which was at best an off-shoot of his literary art. A later work like *Sisu Bholanath** (1922) develops the notion of an ideal child as a symbolic representative of man, but here the child is all too literally a child who could not have occupied more than a major poet's leisure. The original *Sisu** (1903) poems—which contribute all but six pieces of *The Crescent Moon*—were actually written for Tagore's own children, and there is no denying their special charm in the original language where the exactly right word and tone were within Tagore's creative resources. Rendered into English, they bring nothing over except rather ponderous whimsy, unremitting sweetness, and an overdone solemnity about trifles. It may be a clue to Tagore's subconscious that most of the poems are about a male-child talking to his mother, but they should only have been published in English, if at all, after his artistic reputation was secure. The better pieces are those which are not taken from *Sisu**—like "Benediction," which is a simple prayer from *Kari o komal** or "The Last Bargain," whose original appeared later in *Gitali**. The latter had been composed in Bengali at Urbana and is allegedly the only poem Tagore ever composed while in the United States. Krishna Kripalani has speculated that the metaphor of buying and selling used in this poem may have some relation to Tagore's first impressions of American life.⁴⁵ Three pieces from this volume, formerly belonging to *Gitanjali*, were among those poems set to Western melodies by John Alden Carpenter.⁴⁶ Another indirect honour to the credit of *The Crescent Moon* was that when it was first translated into Spanish by Zenobia Camprubi, the Spanish poet Juan Ramon Jiminez was so impressed by them that he came under Tagore's influence for a time and also married the translator. Several major works by Jiminez between 1916 and 1923 are said to bear the influence of Tagore's English verse.⁴⁷

One outstanding piece from *Gitanjali* included here under

45. See *A Biography*, p. 237. Also, *Rabindra-jibani*, II, 338.

46. See "When and Why," "The Source," and "On the Seashore" in *Gitanjali : Poems by Rabindranath Tagore : Music By John Alden Carpenter* (New York, 1914).

47. See Graciela P. Nemes, "Of Tagore and Jimines," *Books Abroad*, XXXV (1961), 319-323 ; and the same author's "Tagore and Jiminez : Poetic Coincidences," *A Centenary Volume*, pp. 187-197.

the title "On the Seashore" is this volume's sole distinction. The simple image of children playing on the seashore expands from stanza to stanza into a comprehensive vision of life. The organic structure of the poem permits this magnitude without any loss of concentration, the whole being controlled by contrasts that evolve out of the central opposition between the helpless children and the mighty sea. "They build their houses with sand, and they play with empty shells," but there is unceasing creativity in their play. In this power of play lies the eternal triumph of life, as long as "on the seashore of endless worlds there is the great meeting of children."

This was one of the poems unerringly selected by Yeats for his readings to Tagore's first English audience,⁴⁸ and became the subject of an interesting exchange of letters between Yeats and T. Sturge Moore,⁴⁹ who were helping Tagore to make final the English versions. This exchange is the only published evidence we have of the kind of assistance received by Tagore in his early translations. A recent writer on Yeats has speculated that Tagore's central image in this poem may have induced a similar image in Yeats's "At Algeciras" (*Winding Stair and Other Poems*, 1933), though Yeats also refers to Isaac Newton in the same context and may have found his metaphor in the mathematician's celebrated remark about picking up pebbles on the seashore.⁵⁰ Later, the image seems to have reappeared once more in Hart Crane's poem, "The Bottom of the Sea is Cruel," which is now "Voyages I" in *White Buildings* (1926).⁵¹

When Tagore's fourth volume of English verse appeared three years later, he had retreated to the source of his first success. More than half the poems of *Fruit-Gathering* (1916) are taken from his third period, which had already given the main body to *Gitanjali*. *Gitimalya** and *Gitali** have the largest share in the new collection, and some poems from *Smaran** (1903) are

48. See C. F. Andrews, "Rabindranath Tagore," *Visva-Bharati News*, XXII : 11 (May 1961), 198-200, reprint of an earlier article from same periodical (May 1940).

49. See W. B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore : *Their Correspondence*, p. 22, p. 190.

50. See F. A. C. Wilson, *Yeats's Iconography* (London, 1960), pp. 286-287.

51. See Brown Weber, *Hart Crane, A Biographical and Critical Study* (New York, 1948). Quoted in *A Tagore Reader* (1961), pp. 391-392.

used for the first time. The *Smaran** poems were written in the memory of his wife, who died in November 1902, and the original pieces are a striking testimony of Tagore's capacity to sublimate a real and personal sorrow in poetry. The dignity of controlled grief can be felt in the translations, XLV to XLVIII, where the characteristically bare framework is suitable to the elegiac tone.

There is a brief return in this volume to an even earlier phase—the narrative poems from *Katha** (1900), a collection Tagore had not used so far for translation. *Katha** belongs to that phase when Tagore searched for themes in the historical past of India, a search which underlies many of his philosophical notions and also gave impetus to a revival of the *ashram* ideal that materialized as the Santiniketan school. In translation these narratives retain their story-element without dramatic loss, and the four Buddhist tales are particularly notable as evidence of the emotional allegiance Tagore always gave to the Buddha. The most successful translation, however, is the *Chitra** piece rendered as XIV, where Tagore has made a compact English version of a long narrative poem without sacrificing any essentials of the original. It is also one of Tagore's rare tributes to a Brahmin.

The only advance made in this volume, with regard to his Bengali career, is in the poems taken from *Balaka** (1916). With *Balaka** we enter Tagore's fourth period, which includes in other genres the play, *The Cycle of Spring*, and the novel, *The Home and the World*, and is like a second coming in the context of Tagore's total career. The profusion of devotional songs he had produced ever since 1910 had made his followers wonder if Tagore had exhausted himself and surrendered his lyric gifts to the sole service of divinity. *Balaka** was a powerful reminder that he had much more to say yet, even if it meant abandoning the hard-won peace of the *Gitanjali* period. His trip abroad in 1912-13 and the outbreak of the war in 1914 must also have been responsible for unsettling the poet and releasing new creative energies.

The original *Balaka* poems are remarkably free in form and intellectually abstract in content. To use the statement of poem

52. See *Fruit-Gathering* XIX, XXXI, XXXVII, XLIII. The last was later turned into the dance-drama, *Syama*.*

no. 13, the poet has received "the summons of his forgotten youth" and he responds in a new-found sense of wonderment at the eternal flux of life in which elements renew, preserve and sometimes surpass themselves. The formal beauties of these poems are impossible to reproduce in translation, but the freedom from mystical obscurities can be sensed even in the English versions. Tagore did not venture to tackle the more complex originals, but any of "The Boatman (XLV) or "The Oarsmen" (LXXXIV) or "Thanksgiving" (LXXXVI) will give some idea of how different Tagore's poetry had become since he wrote the original *Gitanjali**. On a minor key, X reads like a part of the declaration of independence that *Balaka** as a whole signified. The presence of these poems in *Fruit-Gathering* brings Tagore's career as English poet out of the familiar territory surrounding *Gitanjali*, but not far enough out yet to dispel that initial impression of langour and misty effulgence.

It may be noted that since the publication of *The Crescent Moon*, Tagore had been translating his own poetry without the assistance or supervision of English poets and friends. When sending the manuscript of *Fruit-Gathering* to Rothenstein, he wrote, "This time I shall have to brave the risk of publishing them with all their imperfections unaltered, except errors of grammar and idiom."⁵³ Four months earlier, in rejecting the alterations suggested by Robert Bridges for a poem to be included in the anthology, *The Spirit of Man* (1916), Tagore had explained : ".....the situation is changed now. And if it be true that Yeats's touches have made it possible for *Gitanjali* to occupy the place it does then that must be confessed. At least by my subsequent and unadulterated writings my true level should be found out and the faintest speck of lie should be wiped out from the fame I enjoy now. It does not matter what the people think of me but it does matter all the world to me to be true to myself."⁵⁴ The tone of injured pride which may be discerned in these statements was in reaction to the rumours that the success of his *Gitanjali* had been due to Yeats's share in the translations. Tagore's

53. Letter dated August 20, 1915 from Santiniketan, *Papers WR*, no. 66.

54. Letter to Rothenstein dated April 4, 1915 from Santiniketan, quoted in *Men and Memories*, ii, 300-301. Original in *Papers WR*, no. 63.

indignation, however, blinded him to the need to devise other ways of translation than his modest aim "to make them simple with just a suggestion of rhythm to give them a touch of the lyric....."⁵⁵ Also, he failed to develop the confidence to leave the beaten track and venture into new realms of his own poetry.

These shortcomings were badly exposed in the next publication, *Lover's Gift and Crossing* (1918), which combined two small collections. For his career abroad, it was as much of a tactical error as was *The Crescent Moon*. It came too soon after *Fruit-Gathering* to accommodate a departure to new sources, and Tagore had to rely on his older stock, already covered in previous translations. The two titles suggest a demarcation between two types of poems in the new volume. *Lover's Gift* corresponds to *The Gardener* variety, and sources all the way back from *Kari o komal** have been drawn upon, with the largest concentration on *Kshanika**. *Crossing* corresponds to the *Gitanjali* phase, and all the original volumes of this period have contributed, the major share going to *Kheya** which also lends the English title. Fourteen poems from *Balaka** complete the tally, and the entire new volume turned out to be something like an anthology of Tagore's English career.

The opening poem of *Lover's Gift* is an example of the harm Tagore could do to his own poetry. It renders a typical *Balaka** poem, "Shah-jahan," where the poet uses that immemorial token of imperial love, the Tajmahal, as the concrete object for an abstract discussion about the imperishable nature of art. Truncated and simplified in translation, the English version offers only a solitary picture, with none of the burden of history and brooding Time that hovers over the original poem. The translation was such an obvious failure that it has been left out of the *Collected Poems*. Another kind of failure occurs in *Lover's Gift* : XXII, translated from a *Kshanika** poem where, under cover of raillery, the poet uses the paraphernalia of Vaishnav poetry to conjure up a literary past ; the literal translation of these symbols into English raises no echoes, and the mock-serious tone is nowhere to be found. Only in pieces where the basic imagery is simple and the emotional content primary—as in *Lover's Gift* XXIX, LII, and *Crossing* VIII, XX, XXXIX—

55. *Ibid.*

does Tagore translate successfully, but this success had already been demonstrated over and over again in the four previous volumes.

At one point of what we have designated his fourth period, namely 1916-1932, Tagore had wrestled for the first time with the problem of bringing "my language near to the language of men," in Wordsworth's words. The volumes, *Palataka** (1918) and *Lipika** (1922) represent Tagore's early attempts to tackle what was later to become a major concern. It is surprising to find a letter in the London *Times* referring to this and suggesting an influence of Tagore's English career upon his work in Bengali. The letter said : "We all know how successfully Sir Rabindranath Tagore translated the lyrics of his 'Gitanjali' into measured English prose. It is interesting to find that the poet, perhaps as a result of this feat of translation, is now writing prose-poems in his native Bengali, on the model of his English versions..."⁵⁶

This correspondent, J. D. Anderson, knew Bengali and he illustrates his point by translating one of Tagore's poems in the new manner.⁵⁷ Twelve years later Tagore himself confirmed this speculation when he wrote in the introduction to *Punascha** (1932) ; "I had translated the Gitanjali songs into English prose. These translations were acknowledged as poetry. Ever since then I have wondered if the poetic essence cannot be evoked in Bengali prose even when the distinct rhythm of poetry has been omitted, as in the English."⁵⁸ This probably is the only instance where Tagore's career as English poet had some bearing upon his original work in Bengali.

At the same time, the copious translation work he had been doing since *Gitanjali* had given him sufficient practice in the writing of English to enable him to handle the language with increasing confidence. *Nationalism* onwards, many of his lectures and essays were composed originally in English, his letters contain some of his most effective use of the language, and there is some evidence that he also tried to write poetry in English. Harriet Monroe preserved a twelve line poem in English dated March 20, 1912, in Tagore's handwriting which

56. January 8, 1920, p. 21.

57. Tagore's own version of this poem is included in *The Fugitive* as II-4.

58. Translated. See *Rachanavali*, xvi.

was perhaps enclosed in a letter.⁵⁹ The Tagore material in the William Rothenstein Papers includes a sheaf of typescripts of rhymed English poems which appear to be original compositions ;⁶⁰ there is no indication, however, of their precise authorship. Then there are the five pieces reproduced by Edward Thompson, in unrhymed English verse, which have not been published elsewhere.⁶¹ The only example of his English verse published in a final form is the long poem, *The Child* (London, 1931), originally written for the script of a proposed documentary film on Indian life, and later published separately when the film proposal did not materialize. Yet Tagore always professed great modesty about his use of English, and never lost an opportunity to deprecate it, as in one of his last letters to Rothenstein ".....I am no such fool as to claim an ex-orbitant price for my English which is a borrowed acquisition coming late in my life."⁶³

The Fugitive (1921) was the last collection of Tagore's own translated verse to be published abroad. The title is a translation of the name of the Bengali volume published three years earlier, *Palataka**, though the opening poem of the English volume bellongs to the even earlier *Balaka**. As mentioned above, *Palataka** marks a new experiment with colloquial speech in Tagore's Bengali career, and the stories told in it resemble Tagore's short stories of Bengali life. Another recent source used for the new English volume is *Lipika** (1922), from which about twenty poems appear here. The *Lipika** poems were Tagore's first attempt in the form he later improved and called *gadya-kavita* (prose-poetry). By his own admission, the attempt was inspired by his success with this form in English, and these poems naturally lend themselves to very smooth translation.⁶⁴ The translations from *Palataka** and *Lipika** brought Tagore's career in English up to date with his latest composition in Bengali.

59. A note in another hand under the poem reads : "Composed and written by Rabindranath Tagore," *HM Collection*.

60. Literary MSS, Box 52.

61. *Poet and Dramatist* (1948), pp. 269-270.

62. Included in *A Tagore Reader* (1961), pp. 340-347.

63. Letter dated November 26, 1932 from Santiniketan, quoted in *Since Fifty*, pp. 112-113. Original in *Papers WR*, no. 122.

64. See *The Fugitive* : II-24, II-27.

Among other new feature of *The Fugitive* are the three sections of translations from other Indian sources,⁶⁵ of which the Vaishnava songs⁶⁶ and the Baul songs⁶⁷ are of special significance to the Tagore student because these form an integral part of Tagore's own literary heritage. The dialogues from *Kahini** (1900) which have been translated here should really be considered along with Tagore's dramatic writing. This is true also of "Kacha and Devyani" which Tagore has rendered from *Viday-abhisap** (1894).⁶⁸ Their importance to Tagore's poetry is the transition they mark between the use of blank verse in Tagore's early drama and the unrhymed speech of his later verse-drama.

The remaining body of *The Fugitive* consists mostly of poems drawn from his second period. Some of Tagore's greatest single poems appear in English version here—"Chanchala" (I-1); "Urvasi" (I-11); "Sonar tari" (I-17); "Palataka" (III-20); "Balaka" (III-29)—but invariably they have suffered beyond recognition in being translated. The very opening poem, for example, characterizes Tagore's strange insensitiveness and near-sighted procedure. The epithet "Eternal Fugitive" is an interpolation and replacement for the strong visual image of a great river in the original "Chanchala," with the result that all the associated images have lost their vital relation to the mainstream of the poem. "Sonar tari" and "Balaka" have been so ruthlessly abridged that they appear here as riddles. "Urvasi" labours to recapture its original luxuriance, and the omission of the last two stanzas has left an incomplete portrait of this ideally complete woman. Only "Palataka" among these poems loses little in the transmutation to English, and another poem from the same

65. These are omitted in the *Collected Poems*.

66. See Muriel Kent, "Rabindranath Tagore and His Origins," *Quarterly Review*, CCLIII (October 1929), 345-356.

A comprehensive account of the Vaishnava origins is presented in Bimanbehari Majumdar, *Rabindra sahitye padavali stran* (Calcutta, 1960).

67. See Edward C. Dimock, Jr., "Rabindranath Tagore—The Greatest of the Bauls of Bengal", *Journal of Asian Studies*, XIX (November 1959), 33-51.

68. Edward Thompson made a rhymed translation of the same poem in *The Curse at Farewell* (1924).

source rendered as III-13 emerges chastened but unscathed. The success in these cases is due to the comparatively spare structure and style Tagore was trying out in all the *Palataka** poems.

The Fugitive carried Tagore's poetical work up to the year 1922 and his career as poet terminates there as far as readers abroad were concerned. This leaves out the better part of his fourth period,⁶⁹ and all of his last two periods.⁷⁰ The fifth contains that phase where he was preoccupied with exploring the borderland between poetry and prose in search of a verse medium whose liberation from rhyme would bring it closer to everyday speech and modern times.⁷¹ The final period followed a very serious illness in 1937, and the encounter with seeming death gave him an entirely new perspective on life in general and his own life in particular.⁷² The poetry of this period is so different from all that had gone before that Bengali criticism has not yet come to ultimate terms with it. Some of his own translations from this period have been published in India,⁷³ and other Indian translators have only recently begun applying themselves to the subject.⁷⁴ As far back as 1925, Edward Thompson had said in an introduction to a selection of his own translations: "Tagore is known to the West almost solely as a mystical poet. I have tried to present sides of his versatile effort that are unrepresented in his own

69. For Tagore's own translations from this period, see *Poems*, nos. 60, 70-74, 89, 91-93.

Translations from *Mohua** (1929), also from this period, are now available as *The Heralds of Spring*, trans. Aurobindo Bose (London, 1957).

70. These have been fully discussed in Sisirkumar Ghose, *The Later Poems of Tagore*.

71. For Tagore's own translations from this period, see *Poems*, nos. 94-102.

Syamali, trans. Sheila Chatterjee (Calcutta, 1955), also belongs to this period.

72. For a short discussion, see Niharranjan Roy, "Rabindranath Tagore—The Last Phase," *Rabindranath*, ed. Amiya Chakravarty and others (Calcutta, 1944).

73. See *Poems*, nos. 104, 106, 107, 109-111, 113.

74. For example, *The Wings of Death*, trans. Aurobindo Bose (London, 1961).

translations.”⁷⁵ The proper representation of Tagore’s poetry, in translation by others, remains to be accomplished.

Though he brought no gifts to the infant, Tagore appeared by the cradle-side when modern American poetry was being born between the pages of the *Poetry* magazine. His presence there was a happy accident, but many of his own poetic achievements were similar to those of some nineteenth-century American poets. Like William Cullen Bryant, Tagore had worshipped in God’s first temples and meditated upon facing death with unfaltering trust. Like Edgar Allen Poe, the young Tagore had possessed heart-strings of a lute and sung wildly well, conjured up visions of supernal beauty and roamed alone with his soul. After maturity, Tagore had yielded himself to the perfect whole no less devotedly than Emerson ; at didactic moments, Tagore had offered innumerable lessons in verse of the kind posed by Emerson’s fable of the mountain and the squirrel. Tagore’s devotional songs were as passionately trustful of the divine as Whittier’s hymns, and, in comparatively less literate Bengal, Tagore was as much of a household property as Longfellow. In his personal trafficking with divinity, Tagore too had surmised that the horses’ heads were towards eternity ; his summary of his own literary endeavour as “the joy of attaining the Infinite with the finite”⁷⁶ would apply just as well to the poetry of Emily Dickinson.

When Tagore’s peculiar English verse-line first appeared in America, resemblances to Whitman were immediately pointed out.⁷⁷ But this was only a superficial resemblance, which will not stand proper scrutiny. If anything, their modes are exactly the opposite of each other, Whitman working by extension and reiteration and accumulation, whereas Tagore lacks that kind of energy in English and has to depend on single and singular statements. Neither do they resemble each other in their conception of themselves as poets—Whitman drawing out of the inexhaustible resources

75. *Rabindranath Tagore* (Augustan Books of Modern Poetry Series: London, 1925).

76. *My Reminiscences*, p. 240.

77. For example, see New York *Times* reviews of November 3 1913 and January 25, 1914.

of his "self" and identifying it with everything around him in ever-widening absorption, whereas Tagore can reach his "self" only by intuitive perception. The only area which these two poets have shared is their vision of universal humanity, though here again they achieve this vision in opposite ways, Whitman by outward projection and Tagore by inward reflection. Both, however, seem to recognize the need and own the capacity to reconcile "the paradox of palpable evidence and eternal principle."⁷⁸ The motto given to Visva-Bharati by Tagore, "where the world makes its home in a single nest," would translate almost exactly in Whitman's language as "I contain multitudes."

Among modern Americans, only Robert Frost would be comparable to Tagore in the stature of a national poet. They had made their first impact at about the same time upon England during the era of "Georgian poetry", and both were introduced within a few months of each other to America by Ezra Pound through the *Poetry*. In commending Frost's *North of Boston* (1914) to American readers, Edward Garnett wrote, "It would be quaint indeed if Americans who.....are opening their bosoms to Mr. Rabindranath Tagore's spiritual poems of Bengal life, should rest oblivious of their own countryman."⁷⁹ Familiarity with Bengal life may have extended Tagore's circle of American readers, because in some portions of his poetry, Tagore is as much of a regional poet as Frost. He, too, has upon occasion meditated upon the human predicament as seen in an ordinary situation and "played with paradoxes"—to use Frost's recent phrase about Tagore.⁸⁰ It may be a mere coincidence, but in one of the poems of his last published collection ⁸¹ we find Frost making a fresh use of the "passage to India" theme so well known in American poetry.

78. Lokenath Bhattacharya, "Whitman and Tagore," *Span* (May 1961), p. 11.

Also see Robert Gilkey, "Whitman and Tagore," *Quest* (Monsoon 1962), pp. 21-27.

79. Quoted in *Literary History of the United States* (1953), p. 1189.

80. See Robert Frost, "Remarks on the Occasion of the Tagore Centenary," *Poetry*, XCIX (November 1961), 106-119.

81. See "America is Hard to See," in *In the Clearing* (New York 1962).

Considering the variety of material Tagore produced for dramatic purpose throughout a long life, it will be more relevant to discuss Tagore as a writer who used the dramatic form in a number of ways rather than as a writer of plays.¹ This is in keeping with the ancient tradition of the Indian theatre where drama is one of the important ingredients but not the whole action. The source book of classical Indian drama, Bharat's *Natya-sastra*, embraces dance as well as drama, and the Sanskrit word *nat* really meant "performer" rather than its modern equivalent "actor." Even after the great flowering of Sanskrit drama as represented by Kalidas (circa fourth-fifth century A. D.) had scattered and Indian drama turned for sustenance to the folk-theatre of various regions on the sub-continent, the tradition of stage-spectacle dominating over dramatic action has persisted.² Because he never entirely abandoned the Indian tradition, Tagore "never became a real dramatist in the European sense of the word."³

1. For critical commentary in English on Tagore's drama apart from Edward Thompson's study, see : *

P. Guha Thakurta, *The Bengali Drama : Its Origin and Development* (London, 1930), Chs. xxvii-xxix.

Amar Mukherjee, "Rabindranath Tagore : 1861-1941," *World Theater*, V (Spring 1956), 123-130.

Lila Ray, "The Plays of Tagore," *Indo-Asian Culture*, VI (July 1957), 79-90.

Hirankumar Sanyal, "The Plays of Rabindranath Tagore," *A Centenary Volume* (1961), p. 233-242.

K. R. S. Iyenger, "Tagore the Playwright," *Indian Writing in English* (Bombay, 1962), Ch. vii. Reproduced in *Indian Literature*, IV (1961), 51-64.

2. See Balwant Gargi, *Theatre in India* (New York, 1962) for an account of the variety and development of Indian dramatic forms from ancient to modern.

3. Dusan Zbavitel, *Archiv Orientalni*, XXIV, 585.

Yet, while his fidelity to Indian dramatic tradition is beyond question, it must not be overstressed to exclude his own awareness of European drama. That he was stimulated by this awareness is easily proved, because his first dramatic venture, the musical drama *Valmiki-pratibha** (1881) was born of his introduction to the opera during his first visit to England in 1877-78, and some of its songs are based on Irish melodies.⁴ The three verse-tragedies of his early career—*Raja o rani** (1889), *Bisarjan** (1890), and *Malini** (1896)—were modeled on Elizabethan tragedy. On reading *Malini**, an English friend of Tagore's said he was reminded of Greek drama, but Tagore wrote in his introduction to this play, "..... though I have read translations, Greek drama is quite outside my experience. It is Shakespearean drama which has always been our ideal."⁵ The dance-drama form he developed towards the end of his career may have owed something to his introduction to European ballet. But a substantial portion of his writing for the theatre was occupied in evolving a theatrical form which was basically his own, irrespective of what it derived from sources at home and abroad.

A corollary of this tireless search for a more effective theatre form was his constant recasting of old material into new moulds. Thus the blank verse romance *Chitrangada** became the English *Chitra* (1914) in prose and was later turned into a dance-drama with the original title. Or, *Raja** (1910) re-appeared in the English *The King of the Dark Chamber* (1914) before becoming *Arupratan** (1920), and Tagore left behind an incomplete manuscript where he had begun to rewrite the play again.⁶ Sometimes he found dramatic plots in his own work in another medium—thus, *Bisarjan**, (1890), and *Praya-schitta** (1909) are from his own novels ; *Griha-pravesh** (1925), *Sodh bodh** (1926) and *Taser des** (1933) are from his own short stories ; the dance-drama *Chandalika** (1938) and *Syama** (1939) were originally narrative poems. This re-working with older products has sometimes been attributed to periodical failures of his creative faculty. It can also be taken to be evidence of his self-critical spirit. When he

4. Tagore, *My Reminiscences*, pp. 191-194.

5. Translated. From introduction to this play, *Rachanavali*, iv.

6. See notes, *Rachanavali*, x, 648.

published *Guru** (1918), *Arupratan** and *Rin-sodh** (1921), he clearly announced⁷ that these were acting versions of older plays ; and in the introduction of *Tapati** (1929) he discusses the faults of the earlier *Raja o rani** (1889) which made him rewrite the whole play in order to improve it rather than merely make it more stageworthy. Much of the pleasure he derived from translating his own work into English was the opportunity this gave him for improving the original. Frequently the original plays emerge from his translations shorn of sub-plots and superfluous characters, marking a distinct advance in dramatic structure even if they fail to gain in any other aspect.

Then there were those extra-literary factors which governed his writing for the theatre. He was born into a household whose membership, cultural pursuits, and circle of associates were such that Tagore could write a piece and have it presented at home, acted as well as watched by family members and friends, while receiving appreciation as well as criticism from well-wishers.⁸ This "little theatre " at Jorasanko, the Calcutta residence of the Tagores, enabled him to experiment with dramatic form in the most favourable circumstances and allowed him a freedom that a more hardy apprenticeship would have denied him. He never had to submit to the requirements of the contemporary commercial theatre at Calcutta, much of whose energy was concentrated on using the stage as a platform for political protest.¹⁰ Nor could he see much future in the Bengali stage's trying to imitate the realistic techniques of European theatre, and he determined to work with a dramatic technique that would require the least assistance from the physical properties of the stage.

Also, he was a born actor and thus his theatre experience

7. See introductions to these plays, all in *Rachanavali*, xiii.

8. See *Rachanavali*, xxi.

9. For an account of the Tagore household during the poet's adolescence, see Krishna Kripalani, *A Biography*, Ch. iii.

10. For an account of the Calcutta theatre in the second half of the nineteenth century, see P. Guha Thakurta, *The Bengali Drama*, Cns. xviii-xxvi.

11. In this connection, see his essay, "The Stage," *Drama*, V (1915), 664-668, translated by him from "Rangamancha," *Rachanavali*, v, 449-453. Also, introduction to *Tapati**, *op. cit.*

had this extra dimension that most great playwrights have possessed. When he moved to Santiniketan, the initial advantages were available to him on an even larger scale than at Jorasanko,¹² while he himself became increasingly involved in all aspects of production. He not merely wrote plays and acted in them, he also rehearsed, directed and produced them. As the permanent playwright-in-residence he was constantly in demand to produce something for the occasion, with the result that he often composed pieces by request, which would suit the particular occasion and also make use of available material. The all-male cast of *Saradotsav** surely reflected the preponderantly male population of Santiniketan in 1908, as did the increasing enrollment of girls eighteen years later make possible the all-female cast of *Natir puja**. Having the theme, the performers, and the audience fully attuned to him no doubt ensured the success of anything he produced at Santiniketan, but this harmony was impossible to achieve outside. Even at the height of his fame, Tagore was never Bengal's most popular playwright nor did he exert any great influence on the Bengali theatre. By extension, the farther his plays went from Santiniketan, the less certain was their reception.

In a sense, therefore, the genuine Tagore theatre died with him. Others who collaborated with him in staging his plays testify that he had strong opinions about acting and production, but he left no substantial record of these in writing while his plays, as published, do not contain many directions.¹³ From this has grown the impression, prevalent in his own lifetime, that Tagore's plays can neither be satisfactorily produced nor fully appreciated by any other than those who had gone to school at Santiniketan. Some ground for this impression was removed when in the middle-'50s a Calcutta

12. See Thomson, *Poet and Dramatist*, (1948), pp. 243-244, for the description of a typical performance by Santiniketan teachers and students, with Tagore acting leading roles.

13. A note prefacing his English *Chitra* reads : "The dramatic poem "Chitra" has been performed in India without scenery—the actors being surrounded by the audience. Proposals for its production here having been made to him, he [the author] went through this translation and provided stage directions, but wished these omitted if it were printed as a book."

theatre group known as "Bohu-rupee" began staging *Rakta-karabi** with sensational popular success. Those who saw the New York performance of *The King of the Dark Chamber* during 1961 will agree that given the right kind of imaginative treatment in production—without attempting to emulate Tagore's methods of production—Tagore's plays need not necessarily remain confined to a specialized audience.

Tagore's dramatic works represent such a wide variety of types and mixture of forms that no classifications can be entirely satisfactory. Following a loose chronology of publication, and by putting in each group works which are most similar to each other, these seven headings broadly cover his better-known compositions : (1) musical dramas, where songs dominate over dialogue, as in *Valmiki pratibha** (1881) ; (2) pseudo-historical tragedies in verse, like *Raja o rani** (1889) ; (3) dramatic dialogues in verse, like *Viday abhisap** (1894) ; (4) social comedies in prose, like *Goraye galad** (1892) ; (5) symbolic dramas in prose, like *Raja** (1910) ; (6) miscellaneous playlets, like *Natir puja** (1926) and *Kaler yatra** (1932) ; (7) dance-dramas, where dance substitutes action, as in *Syama** (1939).

Of these, examples only of the pseudo-historical tragedies, the dramatic dialogues, and the symbolic plays have been published in America, giving Tagore a reputation as a playwright that does not represent, either in quality or in quantity, his total work in writing for the theatre. By an unfortunate coincidence, what is excluded from his English versions contains some of his finest achievement in the theatre medium. And this exclusion is not through any oversight but because these are the least translatable—the song-studded musical dramas where his great gifts as composer, of song as well as of tune, obtain full play ; the masterly verse of his dramatic dialogues, where he was breaking new ground in Bengali poetry ; the dance-dramas, which are his final statement in theatre expression. Even those works which answer the conventional requirements of stageworthiness are in the social comedy genre,¹⁴ whose most vital element, witty dia-

14. The three comedies, *Goraye galad** (1892), *Baikunther khata** (1897) and *Chirakumar sabha** (1926), were Tagore's only successes on the public stage.

logue, cannot be transposed from Bengali to English, nor would the situations retain their comic flavour in transference across time and language.

Translation affected Tagore's dramatic work in ways different from the changes caused in the translation of his poetry. There it was only the poet's own voice which was altered, and the alteration was uniform. The same uniform alteration took place in his plays, so that all the characters seem to speak the same language. This takes away the clear distinction Tagore makes in the original between the principals and the others through shades of speech. The secondary level is extremely important in any Tagore play because it is among the wayfarers, the passing minstrels, the rural rustics, the common citizenry, that his native Bengal is recaptured to give the plays a foundation in reality.¹⁵ Secondly, in reading the plain prose of the translation, we get no idea of Tagore's various experiments with dramatic speech. He began by developing a Bengali blank verse suitable to the tragedies, then changed to a rhymed verse of extreme flexibility, before settling for a medium that is basically prose but with poetic overtones which come uppermost at heightened moments. Also, it permitted greater range in drama—as he explained once, "Poetry is like the sea, whose speciality is in its currents ; but prose is landscape, and it is able to express various moods—forest, mountain, desert, flat ground, uneven land"¹⁶ Thirdly, songs occupy a prominent place in practically every play by Tagore,¹⁷ sometimes underlining a particular mood, sometimes acting as choric commentary, sometimes providing emotional relief. A song is a familiar convention to an Indian audience, and Tagore adopted it readily because of his own natural gifts of musical composition. But in translation, the dramatic function of the songs is ruled out, leaving gaps in the dramatic structure.

Chitra (1914) was the first example of Tagore's work in English, translated by him from the short play, *Chitrangda**

15. Edward Thompson was the first to point this out. See *Poet and Dramatist* (1948), p. 295.

16. Translated. From notes to *Tapati**, *Rachanavali*, xxi, 436-437.

17. Only *Dakghar** was without a song originally, but one was incorporated later on. —

published nearly twenty-two years ago.¹⁸ Though the blank verse original has more than two characters and the action occupies several scenes, it may be treated as belonging to the category of dramatic dialogues because it shares several features with the other well-known pieces in this category. In all of them the stories are taken from epic or legendary sources, they concentrate on one aspect of a larger situation, the essential argument is between a man and a woman, and they all explore the nature of human relationships. By examining mythical incidents in the light of modern motivations of human conduct, Tagore has emulated what playwrights all over the world have done. His special achievements in these dialogues is the way he strikes a balance between traditional concepts and modern trends. Without in any way reducing the epic stature of Arjuna, Tagore builds Chitra up to be Arjuna's worthy mate by requiring of her not only physical beauty but also strength of character.¹⁹ American reviewers saw in *Chitra* an allegorical plea for the emancipation of women, but Tagore was using her story to portray his ideal of marital love. This was also his view of Kalidasa's treatment of love in *Sakuntala*, and in an introductory essay to Laurence Binyon's version of the Sanskrit classic, Tagore wrote, "The poet has shown how the union of Dushyanta and Sankuntala in the First Act as mere lovers is futile, while their union in the last Act as the parents of Bharata is a true union."²⁰ In *Chitra*, too, the true fulfilment of love occurs only when Arjuna learns that Chitra is with child by him. *

Other examples of the dramatic dialogue appeared in translation later²¹ but they fail, as *Chitra* does, to signify the importance of these pieces in Tagore's dramatic career. In their original form they are the testing ground of his verse-medium for drama, as well as a turning point in his search for

18. It has again been translated more fully than before. See *Chitrangada*, trans. Birendranath Roy (Calcutta, 1957).

19. See his introduction to the play, *Rachanavali*, III.

20. *Sakuntala* : by Kalidas, prepared for the English stage by Kedar-nath Das Gupta in a new version written by Laurence Binyon (London, 1920), xxv-xxvi.

21. See "Kacha and Devyani," "Ama and Vinayaka," "The Mother's Prayer," "Somaka and Ritvik," "Karna and Kunti," all in *The Fugitive* (1921).

dramatic form. The original *Chitrangada** saw him reach the utmost point of development of his dramatic blank verse before he abandoned it altogether for rhymed verse : the succeeding dialogues in rhymed verse lead up to his last verse tragedy, *Malini** (1896), after which he turned to an entirely new dramatic form in *Saradotsav** (1904). The English *Chitra*, therefore, is no more than an extended exhibition of the English prose that he had made peculiarly his own, a prose which had only recently startled the English-speaking world in his *Gitanjali*. The play did not establish his claims as a playwright in English, nor did it provide genuine evidence of his work in the original.

Chitra was followed the same year by *The Post Office* (1914) and *The King of the Dark Chamber* (1914), which represent two extremes of Tagore's achievement in the category of symbolic drama, both within the *Gitanjali** period of his poetical career. The original twenty-year gap between *Chitrangada** and these plays is leaped in a few months of his English career. And because these plays followed the English *Gitanjali* so closely, they marked Tagore indelibly as a writer of mystical plays²² which were perhaps "intended merely to be read, and could not be staged with any hope of interesting an audience."²³

The Post Office was translated by Devabrata Mukherjee, an Indian student then at Oxford, from Tagore's *Dakghar** (1912)²⁴ and has thrived best among all his plays in English. It is a faithful English version, unlike some of Tagore's own translations where he took large liberties with the original. It had the distinction of being staged abroad long before the original was staged at home,²⁵ is the one Tagore play most often performed in foreign countries, and has been anthologized in America.²⁶ The main action occupying the gradual

22. See Amiya Chakravarty's introduction to the section on drama and the selection of dramatic pieces in *A Tagore Reader* (1961) as an attempt to dispel this impression.

23. Homer E. Woodbridge *Dial*, LVIII, 48.

24. The play must have been translated almost immediately after the Bengali original was published.

25. Produced at the Court Theatre, London, May 1913 ; first Bengali production at Santiniketan, October 1917. See *Rabindra-jibani*, ii, 348.

26. See *Short Plays by Representative Authors*, ed. Alice Mary Smith

decline of a sick young boy may seem a sentimental contrivance, but it is saved from mere pathos by the simple rendering of the situation and extremely natural dialogue. The central symbol of the post office, simultaneously real and representational, unites the surface story with its larger meaning with very little effort. If we read Tagore's recollections of his own boyhood²⁷ with this play in mind, it will be clear that young Amal's imminent death is more spiritual release than physical decay, that the illness is not so much in him as in his situation. The longing felt by Amal is significantly similar to Tagore's own at that age. As he explained once to C. F. Andrews: "Amal represents the man whose soul has received the call of the open road—he seeks freedom from the comfortable enclosure of habits sanctioned by the prudent and from walls of rigid opinion built for him by the respectable."²⁸ This theme of the sensitive individual's urge to escape from some collective, life-denying bondage constitutes the symbolic action of most of Tagore's serious plays.

Yeats had written about *The Post Office*: "When this little play was performed in London.....some friends of mine discovered much detailed allegory,.....but the meaning is less intellectual, more emotional and simple."²⁹ The reverse is true of *The King of the Dark Chamber* whose highly intellectualized theme falters due to inadequate dramatic presentation, and may be reduced to a simple allegory unsuccessfully concealed under a chaos of symbols. In defending the play, Tagore wrote to Andrews: "Critics and detectives are naturally suspicious. They scent allegories and bombs where there are no such abominations. It is difficult to convince them of our innocence."³⁰ But only a straightforward allegorical interpretation can rescue the play from total obscurity of meaning.

Even the original *Raja** (1910) baffled Bengali admirers.

(New York, 1920) and *Columbia University Courses in Literature*, general editor John W. Cunliffe, Vol. I, (New York, 1928).

27. See chapter entitled "Within and Without" in *My Reminiscences*, pp. 8-24.

28. *Letters To A Friend*, p. 172.

29. In introduction to private edition of *The Post Office* (Dundrum, Ireland, 1913).

30. *Letters to a Friend*, p. 48.

and Tagore made at least two references later in writing to explain its meaning.³¹ The search of the human soul for realization of God as portrayed in the uncomprehending queen's meeting her invisible king in a dark chamber is clear enough. But in elaborating this situation so many subsidiary abstractions are brought in that the symbiotic structure of the play becomes too over-loaded to convey meaning. In the original, the two opening songs help to set the mood of exalted communion, and the language occasionally throws out leading suggestions. But these are not present in the translation which, incidentally, was not done by Tagore and published almost without his knowledge. On hearing that the book had been issued, he wrote to Rothenstein, "The manuscript that you had with you was the first draft and in the later ones the translations have undergone such a vast deal of alterations that it is quite a different thing now. So I was rather put out at the sudden appearance of this book with all its crudities, but it cannot be helped."³² It is significant that he omitted this play from his collected works in English. It had appeared between *Gitanjali* and *Sadhana*, and to admirers of these two volumes the play was an attempt to render visual some of the more abstruse ideas of these two volumes. Although the plot is taken from a Buddhist tale,³³ in spirit the play belongs to that phase of his poetry which culminated in *Gitanjali*.*

The term "symbolic drama," which had by now begun to be applied to Tagore's plays abroad,³⁴ has to be stretched its

31. Once in his 1917 essay, "Amar dharma." For a translation, see *A Tagore Testament*, trans. Indu Dutt (New York, 1954), p. 58.

Again in the introduction to *Arupratan** (1920). See *Rachanavali*, XIII.

32. Letter dated July 8, 1914 from Santiniketan, *Papers WR*, no. 75.

In the same letter, Tagore informed Rothenstein that the first translation had been done by Kshitish Chandra Sen, and urged that Macmillan should announce the translator's name and correct the impression that the play had been "translated by its author." No correction was offered by the publishers in subsequent editions of the book, but advertisements for the book gave the translator's name.

33. See Heinz Mode, "The King of the Dark Chamber' and Its Folklore Background," *Tribute to Tagore* (Bombay, 1961), pp. 66-68.

34. Mervyn D. Coles uses the term "symbolistic drama" in his article, "The Plays of Tagore," *Contemporary Review*, CLXXXIII (May 1953), 293-295.

utmost to include *The Cycle of Spring* (1917), Tagore's next English play. When its original, *Phalguni** (1916) was published in the *Sabujpatra* magazine, Tagore said in a prefatory note : "It is not certain whether this piece is drama or not ; it will raise questions whether it is an allegory or not ; and there may be difference of opinion about whether its author is a poet or not."³⁵ Like its autumnal predecessor, *Saradotsav** (1908),³⁶ *Phalguni** is like a masque or a stage pageant rather than drama. There are no dances, but the characters move in groups and sing throughout the action. In both plays, a general observation about man's necessary relation to nature is elaborated through reiteration rather than through development, and expressed through a series of songs rather than through speech. Both pieces were originally composed for particular occasions at Santiniketan, *Saradotsav** for the autumn festival of 1908 and *Phalguni** for the spring festival of 1915,³⁷ and some critics have considered them as belonging to a larger cycle of seasonal entertainments, none of them purely dramatic, that Tagore, composed primarily for being performed at Santiniketan.³⁸

The translation of *Phalguni** was begun by others but completed by Tagore.³⁹ Much of the original's pastoral air and festive spirit is retained in the rendering, but without the original lyrics and melodies to offset the repetitions theme, *The Cycle of Spring* could not hope to be the entertaining spectacle that it was in its native dress. The occasional flashes of ironic humour, particularly in the long prelude, introduced a flavour that was new to those who had read Tagore only in translation.

With the publication of *Sacrifice and Other Plays* (1917) the same year, we are back at the beginning of Tagore's play-writing career. *Sanyasi* is the English version of practically his first play written more than thirty years back,⁴⁰ while the

35. Translated. From notes. *Rachanavali*, XII, 598.

36. A translation, "Autumn Festival," appeared in *Modern Review* (November 1919).

37. See *Rabindra-jibani*, ii. 196-197, 410-411.

38. Other such compositions are *Basanta** (1923), *Ritu-utsav** (1926), *Ritu-ranga** (1927), *Navin** (1931). *Sravan-gatha** (1934).

39. See publisher's note, *The Cycle of Spring*.

40. Originally *Praktitir pratisodh** (1884), referred to as "Nature's

three other pieces are severely abridged translations of the verse-tragedies he wrote between 1890 and 1896. These were presumably intended to be acting versions, but their reappearance at this stage in English was a retrograde step and harmful to his reputation abroad as dramatist. The tragedies in particular, stripped of their original rhetorical beauties, are reduced to a point where their original weaknesses of theme and characterization become more apparent. Without the verse that gave them their stature, the principal figures shrink into merely obsessed persons ; without the space that allowed them magnitude, the plots are condensed into mere contrivances.

The original of *Sanyasi* was Tagore's "first play not moulded in song,"⁴¹ as opposed to the predominantly musical *Valmiki pratibha** and *Kalmrigaya** (1882). It gained special significance because of a statement in *My Reminiscences* where he says that the play "may be looked upon as an introduction to the whole of my future literary work ; or rather, this has been the subject on which all my writings have dwelt—the joy of attaining the Infinite within the finite."⁴² The first half of this statement is borne out by his early career. The figure of the ascetic who sought salvation through withdrawal closely resembles the early Tagore whose introversion was leading him towards an artistic dead end. On another occasion he wrote that play contained this truth, that "by accepting this world, by trusting this human society, by respecting all that is tangible, we can truly apprehend the Infinite."⁴³ If the young Amal of *The Post Office* is drawn from Tagore's own boyhood, the ascetic *Sanyasi* represents Tagore's own coming to maturity.

Sacrifice was the most popular of the tragedies when in its original form of *Bisarjan** (1890), because of its bold stand against Brahminical bigotry. In translating it, Tagore turned the Brahmin-sanctioned animal-sacrifice into a symbol of violence and gave it a contemporary significance to the "Revenge" by Tagore in *My Reminiscences*, though it is collected here under the title, *Sanyasi, or the Ascetic*.

41. Translated. From Tagore's introduction to the play, *Rachanavali*, I

42. P. 240.

43. Translated. From notes, *Rachanavali*, I, 628-629.

world of 1917 by dedicating the play to "those heroes who bravely stood for peace when human sacrifice was claimed for the goddess of war." *The King and the Queen* in translation is farthest from its original among all the translations, yet there is not the proportionate improvement that Tagore had intended with such drastic cuts and changes. Four years later, he performed a much better job of renovation when he rewrote the original, *Raja o rani**, to produce *Tapati**.⁴⁴ *Malini**, which retains its original title of 1896, is an early instance of Tagore's fascination with the power of Buddhism, which later informs playlets like *Natir puja** and *Chandalika**.

Red Oleanders (1926) was the last English version of a Tagore play to be published abroad in his lifetime. In fact, the translated version appeared in England the year before the original was published in book form in India. The first version of the original was written in the summer of 1923 with the title "Yakshapuri."⁴⁵ That year Upton Sinclair sent a parcel of his own books to Visva-Bharati. Tagore wrote to him acknowledging the gift and agreed with the viewpoint expressed in Sinclair's *The Brass Check* (1919), then added, "For years I have thought over these things, this especial phase of our modern civilization, and only a few weeks ago I have myself finished a Drama on the same subject. It will be published shortly in English and I shall hope to have the pleasure of sending you a copy."⁴⁷ Before he was in a position to do this, he revised the Bengali version and wrote the last scene—according to Leonard Elmhirst, to whom the play is dedicated—while on a brief visit to western India in November 1923.⁴⁸ This was not published until next autumn in the *Prabashi* magazine and translated into English about this time.⁴⁹ In

44. The original has been translated again as *Devouring Love*, trans. Shakuntala Rao Sastri (New York, 1961).

45. English version published October 1925 from London ; original play December 1926 from Calcutta.

46. *Rabindra-jibani*, III, 142, and notes to the play in *Rachanavali*, xv, 545-549.

47. Letter dated September 4 1923 from Santiniketan, quoted in Upton Sinclair, *My Lifetime in Letters* (Columbia, Mo., 1960), pp. 292-293.

48. See Leonard Elmhirst in *A Centenary Volume*, p. 17. Elmhirst is also quoted by Krishna Kripalani in *A Biography*, p. 307.

49. See *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, II (1924).

the interval, Tagore went on a four month trip to China and Japan, and an entry of September 28, 1924, in his travel diary includes a reference to this play.⁵⁰ No other play of his had occupied him so long, nor had any other play in its inception been so clearly aimed at his audience in both languages.

The original *Raktakarabi** (1926) has become one of the most widely discussed plays in Bengali literature, and its successful staging in recent years has aroused popular interest in the play. The English version was completely ignored in America, and many British reviewers noticed it only to dismiss it as nonsense. Tagore was so disappointed with this reception that he wrote a long letter defending the play to the *Manchester Guardian*.⁵¹ He had already appended a long preface to the play when it was first published in a Bengali periodical in 1924;⁵² he wrote another "statement" when the Bengali original appeared as a book in 1926.⁵³ As may be inferred from the existence of so many explanations, the play as it stands—whether in Bengali or in English—leaves much to be explained. Again it is significant that Tagore left this play out of his collected plays in English.

Red Oleanders, or its original, *Raktakarabi**, is Tagore's last full-length dramatic exercise using the symbolic form. The form should be studied by considering this play along with its immediate predecessor, *Muktadhara** (1922),⁵⁴ and an even earlier piece, *Achalayatan** (1912).⁵⁵ These plays are

50. See *The Diary of a Westward Voyage*, pp. 28-29.

51. Letter was published, along with an editorial comment, under the heading "East and West". Both reproduced in *Viśva-Bharati Quarterly* III (1925), 283-287.

52. Preface is reproduced in the notes to the play, *Ravchanavali*, xv, 545-49.

53. See introduction to the play, *ibid.*

54. Tagore's own translation entitled *The Waterfall* appeared in *Modern Review*, (May 1922).

A later translation by Marjorie Sykes is included in her *Three Plays* (Bombay, 1950).

55. Not yet published in English translation. The title could be literally translated as "Immovable House."

According to Thompson (*Poet and Dramatist*, p. 215), the title should be translated as "The Castle of Conservatism" though Tagore had suggested to him "The Institution of Fixed Beliefs." Another version of

better called "proposition plays"⁵⁶ because they all set forth a specific proposition having to do with the individual's relation to a particular community of men. In each play, the action consists of the individual's revolt against established order and the rebel is generally a young person. In each case the revolt is successful, and possibilities of a superior human order visualized.

This dramatic form relies on clear and consistent symbolism on the one hand, and credible characterization of human beings on the other. As handled by Tagore, it is constantly in danger of letting its symbols proliferate and obscure the human significance. Thus, in *Red Oleanders*, too many supplementary indirections clutter the central concept of the dehumanized kingdom, ruled over by a power and knowledge hungry king, whose only redemption lies in recovering its lost identity through contact with Nandini. The society of Yakshapuri is both the highly organized community of Europe and America, as well as the extortionate structure of British rule in India. The machine is much admired in this kingdom, but there is at the same time horrifying misuse of science. All the characters of the play are slaves of this society, yet they invariably react to Nandini. By the poet's own admission Nandini has been drawn as a woman, but no one responds to her merely as a woman. Her function as liberator is clear, but from where does she derive her power? Is she herself the spirit of life that will redeem this kingdom, or is it her unshakeable belief in such a spirit, which Ranjan seems to embody for her, that will bring about this redemption? Ranjan is the most puzzling figure of all—he is presented only by reference and allusion for the best part of the action; when he does appear he is dead. The denouement which sacrifices Ranjan but releases the King from his self-confinement leaves the future as uncertain as before. Throughout the play one is intermittently made aware of the profound prob-

the title, "The Immovable Sanctuary," is used by P. Guha Thakurta in *The Bengali Drama*, p. 201.

For some remarks by Tagore on this play, see *A Tagore Testament*, pp. 59-60. Here the translator refers to the play as "The Rigid Temple"

56. Pramathanath Bishi uses a similar Bengali term, *tattya-natya*, in discussing these plays in his *Rabindra-natya-prabaha* (Calcutta, 1958).

lems being touched upon, but nowhere is there a sustained effort at full statement. Perhaps Tagore was incapable of the kind of dispassionate preconception that this kind of play needed ; instead he depended on the sheer poetry of symbolism to carry him over the hurdles.

As far as his readers in English were concerned, Tagore's dramatic work stopped with *Red Oleanders*. But his Bengali writing for the theatre continued for another thirteen years, during which he continued to innovate. *Natir puja** (1926) and *Chandalika** (1933) were short plays based on Buddhist themes,⁵⁷ and between them came the dramatic parable, *Kaler yatra** (1932), often cited by socialist critics as an outcome of Tagore's visit to Soviet Russia in 1930. According to Dusan Zbavitel, it is "one of the keys to the comprehension of Tagore's conception of the world and politics."⁵⁸ *Kaler yatra** could have been developed into a typical proposition play, and the conversion of the religious festival of *rathayatra* into a universal spectacle of human history is one of Tagore's most promising dramatic symbols.

The most important development of Tagore's later dramatic writing was the dance-drama form which came about almost accidentally. When told that the girls at Santiniketan were rehearsing a mime based on his poem "Pujarini" from *Kahini**,⁵⁹ he set about adapting it into a short play which became *Natir puja**. The dance which climaxed the action of the play was such a successful dramatic device that from this developed the only partially literary form which was Tagore's last and may well be his most lasting contribution to the Indian theatre.⁶⁰ These pieces are "to be seen

57. Both were translated for publication in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, V (1927) and n.s. III (1938).

Later translations by Marjorie Sykes are included in *Three Plays*.

58. *Archiv Orientalni*, XXVI, 379.

59. For Tagore's translation of the poem, see *Fruit-Gathering* : XLIII.

60. Three dance-dramas were published with musical notations : *Nri-tyanatya Chitrangada** (1936), *Nri-tyanatya Chandalika** (1938), and *Nri-tyanatya Syama** (1939). The first two stories had already been used as plays. The third is based on the narrative poem "Parisodh" from *Kahini**. Tagore rendered it in English into a story, included as "Emancipation" in *Broken Ties and Other Stories*.

and to be heard, not to be read"⁶¹ by his own injunction, and and they bring his career full circle back to the point where he had started writing for the stage—" 'Valmiki Pratibha' is not a composition which will bear being read. Its significance is lost if it is not heard sung and seen acted."⁶² If Tagore's entire dramatic career can be viewed as "the sustained effort of a lyrical poet to obliterate himself,"⁶³ then its final submission is to a dramatic form which transmutes lyrical impulse into visual and auditory symbols upon the stage. Tagore once confessed late in life, "I have become very doubtful about creation through words,"⁶⁴ and these dance-dramas have transferred the responsibility of communication from the medium of words to that of melodic sound and bodily rhythm.

Speaking on a B. B. C. programme during Tagore's birth centenary, Hallam Tennyson reminded his listeners that Tagore's dance-dramas were virtually unknown to the western world, and this could will be the means of his next revival in the West.⁶⁵ It would not, of course, be a literary means and is really outside our purview here.

Apart from Tagore's own public readings ⁶⁶ and one public production in New York,⁶⁷ Tagore's plays reached America as dramatic literature, chiefly to be read. In view

61. Translated. From notes, *Rachanavali*, XXV, 424.

62. Tagore in *My Reminiscences*, p. 194.

63. Amar Mukherjee, *World Theatre*, V, 124.

64. Translated. From letter dated February 14, 1939 to Amiya Chakravarty, quoted in notes, *Rachanavali*, XXV, 431.

65. See "Rabindranath Tagore," *The Listener* (May 11, 1961), pp. 825-826.

66. According to a story related by Tagore to Alice Corbin Henderson, after one such reading of *The King of the Dark Chamber* at a Cambridge, Mass. gathering in 1913, a lady came up to him to say, "I suppose that by the king of the dark chamber you mean the spirit of evil. And I suppose, that in your eastern, oriental way, you mean that we should not struggle against it, but give in to it, be reconciled ; but.....that is not our western way, Mr. Tagore—we fight !" —*Poetry*, V (December, 1914), 133.

67. *The Post Office* and *Sacrifice* were produced as a matinee double feature at the Garrick Theater by the Union of East and West organization in December, 1920.

For reviews of performance, see *New York Times*, December, 11, 1920, and *Weekly Review*, III (December 29, 1920), 659.

of the fact that Tagore's writing for the theatre is as little amenable to translation as his conception of drama is suitable for expression in foreign theatre, it is not surprising that he has made so little impression as a dramatist in America. Yet if we look into the annals of American drama, in the unfinished work of William Vaughn Moody there are the beginnings of the modern symbolic drama of spiritual struggle which is also the staple of Tagore's serious plays. It would have been an entirely permissible coincidence had Moody lived long enough to personally welcome Tagore into the house where the Indian poet was to be so welcome a guest on his trips to America. As in Moody's dramatic work, the philosophical purport of Tagore's plays is generally greater than their merit as practical theatre. The central theme is the same in both—the suppression of free development of the human soul—but whereas in Moody's *Masque of Judgment* it is the destructive power of sin that impedes man, in Tagore's *Achalayatan** or *Muktadhara** or *Raktakarabi** it is what man has done to men that imprisons the human soul. In both, love for man is the liberating force and an invincible force once it is liberated. The mystic power of Michaelis in *The Faith Healer* is in essence the same kind of elemental force wielded by Nandini in *Red Oleanders*.

If not in accomplishment, at least in the direction of advance, Tagore's drama stands at the point where American drama began to break through realism towards other expressive theatre media. His *Red Oleanders* is sometimes compared to essays in expressionism like Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine* (1923) and Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* (1922), though Tagore's use of symbols is closer to European sources as in Maurice Maeterlinck and Gerhart Hauptmann. He had always abjured the physical resources of the stage as a barrier to true drama, had persisted with the use of song as a dramatic device, and finally turned to the dance for dramatic expression. In this he was returning to his own origins in the Indian *natya* tradition, but it may be recalled that W. B. Yeats had made a similar breakaway in his plays for dancers. If there has been, as claimed by a London *Times* reviewer,⁶⁸ a gradual

68. "Poet's Prose," (rev. article), *Times Literary Supplement*, October 5, 1962, p. 778.

evolution from Yeats's miniature ceremonies of innocence on the stage, with his beggars and his fools, his subjective and objective protagonists, towards a play like Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1954), then Tagore's drama has its appeal for the American theatre-goer today for its having participated in the growth of modern non-representational drama. Perhaps to acknowledge this merit, Howard Taubman found it convenient to review together Tagore's *The King of the Dark Chamber* and Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood* when they were being produced in New York during 1961.⁶⁹

69. New York *Times*, February 18, 1961.

For other reviews, see *New Yorker*, XXXVII (February 18, 1961), 93 ; *New Republic*, CXLIV (March 6, 1961), 21-22 ; *America*, CIV (March 11, 1961) ; 768 ; *Christian Century*, XXXVIII (April 26, 1961), 535-537.

Towards the end of his career as a writer of Bengali fiction, it was noticeable that Tagore's novels and his short stories seemed to have been approaching some kind of a rapprochement in form, because his novels became shorter while his short stories grew larger. In his English career, however, we are concerned more with his earlier work in fiction than the later, and the distinction between the two genres is more clearly marked. As such, the short stories and the novels have to be considered separately.

i. Short Stories

Tagore's short stories are among the least discussed portions of his literary work in English.¹ Yet it was a short story published in English translation in the *Modern Review* that introduced William Rothenstein to Tagore's work and led to Rothenstein's launching of Tagore in the West.² Tagore's first Western biographer, Ernest Rhys, stressed the importance of Tagore's short stories in his creative writing. Tagore himself is reported to have averred to his followers that they would never be able to dispense with his songs, his short stories, and his paintings.³ And Bengali critics have often speculated whether Tagore's short stories will not be ranked by posterity next only to his poems and songs, and well above his plays and novels.

1. For critical commentary in English, see :
Ernest Rhys, *A Biographical Study*, Ch. v.
D. P. Mukherji, *Tagore—A Study*, Ch. iv.
S. C. Sen Gupta, *The Great Sentinel*, Ch. x.
Nirmalkumar Siddhanta, "Rabindranath's Short Stories," *A Centenary Volume*, pp. 276-292.
2. See *Men and Memories*, ii, 262.
3. Cited by Hirankumar Sanyal in his essay, "Rabindra-natya prasange," in *Rabindranath : Satabarsiki prabandha sankalan*, ed. Gopal Halder (Calcutta, 1961), p. 238.

The lack of appreciation among his readers in English cannot be attributed to these stories being not adequately available in translation. When the first collection, *The Hungry Stones and Other Stories*, appeared in 1916, Tagore had already published a large proportion of his work in this genre and it was possible to make a representative selection. The three following collections continued to illustrate the variety and quality of his stories, although confined to the pre-1916 vintage. Even excluding the later stories, which are comparatively few in number and written at longer intervals, there was enough evidence already published in English translation to deserve attention and invite judgment regarding Tagore's ability as a short-story writer.

Proper appreciation seems to have been impeded chiefly by Tagore's rather loose conception of the short story form at a time when the story had begun to come into its own in America as a distinct art form. Doubts were expressed then as to whether Tagore's stories were genuine short stories at all, and amid the growing sophistication of the short story form in the twentieth century, Tagore's work has receded further into neglect. In addition, the subject matter of Tagore's stories appeared too remote and dull when not wholly strange and inexplicable, because here Tagore was dealing with the simple, everyday life of rural Bengal and writing about ordinary domestic happenings in Bengali lives. Not only was such material unfamiliar to the American reader, it also required a willing suspension of cultural judgments. This is exemplified in the difficulties voiced by one reviewer: "..... the caste system of the Hindu must, for the time being, be accepted. To the Occidental, caste is ludicrous ; but it is at the root of the tragedies of Tagore's stories of Indian life..... These things are real in the stories of Tagore. Is the Western reader able to acknowledge their reality ?"⁵

Then there was the problem of translation, made more intricate here than previously by there being so many translators in each published collection. Tagore translated some

4. An earlier collection of translations published in India was the volume. *Glimpses of Bengal Life*, trans. Rajani Ranjan Sen (Madras, 1913). None of these translations were used for the volumes published abroad.

5. *New York Times*. October 10, 1926, p. 11.

stories himself, in some he collaborated during the translation, some were revised by him after others had translated, and several were wholly translated by others.⁶ In each volume, therefore, the quality of translation varies from story to story, making it impossible for the original flavour of Tagore's Bengali prose style to come through with any uniformity. The very fact of translation diminished two controlling factors of Tagore's original style in stories—his irony and his humour—which are more prominent in his short stories than elsewhere. Without these two safety devices, what comes uppermost is the sentimentalism, which is more readily translatable from one language to another than irony or humour.

The question of sentimentalism⁷ in these stories—and elsewhere—poses a delicate problem of standards not so much literary as of racial temperament. If by sentimentalism is meant a display of emotion that is in excess of the situation, Tagore's men and women often seem to be guilty of such excess. Yet if we consider that in these stories he comes closest to the unsophisticated levels in the life of a people who are notoriously sentimental in real life, we shall find it difficult to draw the line of demarcation beyond which the emotion manifested would err on the side of sentimentalism. Also, some of Tagore's best stories have dealt with sentiments that do not answer to conventional categories of human relations but have sprung from and are contained within that particular context. Thus, rather than charge Tagore with sentimentalism in general, it is more just to observe whether the sentiment generated in a particular story has been put to artistic use.

Tagore came rather late to the writing of short stories, 1891 being the year generally agreed upon as the beginning of this career. By this time he had already published two novels, three plays, six volumes of verse and many other kinds of writing. Several reasons may be offered to explain why he should

6. Complete information about names of translators and original publication of translations is given in the bibliography compiled by Pulinbehari Sen and Subhendusekhar Mukhopadhyay, published in *Indian Literature*, IV (Tagore Number : 1961), 207-217.

7. In this connection, see Gangadhar Gadgil, "Sentimentality in Indian Literature," *Cultural Forum* (November 1961), pp. 83-86.

have waited so long before tackling this particular form when he had tried so many other literary forms with success. One obvious reason was that Bengali literature up to his youth did not have a native tradition in the short story which he could inherit and advance, as he had done in poetry, drama, and the novel. Here he had to start on his own, hence the delayed start as well as the undecided form of his short stories. A practical reason was that until 1891 he did not have at his disposal the obvious vehicle of publication of short stories. It was only after he became associated with the *Hitabadi* magazine that an outlet became available, thereafter he had his own *Sadhana* to write for, so that it was not the issue of demand but of the channel of distribution that had held up his production of short stories. The most important reason, however, was that in 1891 he was put in charge of managing the Tagore family estates situated at interior regions of the provinces of Bengal and Orissa.⁸ Out of this first-hand experience of the countryside came the bulk of his short stories, forty-four in the next four years. Much of the time he travelled and lived on a houseboat which gave him a spectator's eye view of the simple life and common people on both banks of the river. His spontaneous reactions to such observation are recorded in the journals and letters of this period, many of which contain the seeds that were to germinate into the short stories.

Though he spent so much time away from Calcutta, he was able to start and run the magazine, *Sadhana*, which carried his writing in practically every department.⁹ The intimate and, for him, unprecedented acquaintance with a particular geographic region, its natural surroundings and its human inhabitants, produced a wealth of literature in verse as well as prose. The short stories gain a special significance because they illuminate the poems written at this time, and Pramathānath Bishi has worked out a very convincing scheme of inter-relationships between some stories and the corresponding poems from *Sonar tari**, *Chaitali**, and *Chitra**. He suggests that the slack periods in Tagore's production of stories right up to 1917 were compensated in his narrative poems and novels.¹⁰

8. See Krishna Kripalani, *A Biography*, p. 137 ff.

9. See Thompson, *Poet and Dramatist* (1948) pp. 99-100.

10. See *Rabindranāth chhoto-galpa* (3rd ed. ; Calcutta, 1961).

Present day Bengali literature prides itself on the excellent standard achieved and maintained in the short story form by its modern practitioners, and tends to forget the beginnings made by Tagore. But more than an innovation had been brought about by Tagore in his stories. In them the common masses of Bengal's mainly agrarian population, the nameless men and women living undistinguished lives all over the countryside, made their appearance in their own rights for the first time in modern Bengali literature. When Tagore was once criticized for owning the born aristocrat's bias in having written only about the privileged classes, he reminded these critics, "At one time, month after month, I wrote stories only of village life. I am sure that no such sequence of pictures about rural living had ever before appeared in Bengali literature. There was no lack of middle-class writers then, but they were pre-occupied with revering Pratap Singh or Pratapaditya."¹¹ And when commentators stressed that the "lyrical character" of these stories kept them from tackling real issues in life, he protested, "I insist there is no lack of real life in my stories. Whatever I have written about I have myself seen and felt within me. It was my direct experience..... And the root of my stories is personal observation, seen with my own eyes. You are wrong in thinking them lyrically inspired."¹² This insistence on the realistic quality of his short stories is a clue to Tagore's conception of realism as something based on the author's real life experience.

The most successful of Tagore's short stories are those which depend for their effect on unity of atmosphere or mood, rather than on plot or characterization. The unifying element may spring from imaginative fantasy or human sentiment or natural surroundings, but by subordinating all other factors to a single, sustained element of insight, these stories are able to reach beyond the literal surface of life to deeper understanding. Another area of Tagore's success is his careful observation of how customs and beliefs peculiar to Bengali social and domestic life have left their mark on conduct and temperament. These

11. Translated. From quotation in notes, *Rachanavali*, XIV, 538-539. Rajput warrior Pratap Singh and Bengali potentate Pratapaditya were favourite heroes of nationalistic writers of the time.

12. Translated. From notes in *Rachanavali*, XIV, 537-538.

stories are sometimes wrongly admired for their implicit criticism of social evils ; at their best, the social criticism subserves to the far more significant delineation of forces that underlie actions. In some stories Tagore explores the extraordinary emotional possibilities in seemingly ordinary family situations, and here he frequently runs the risk of overworking the situation towards excessive emotion. Most frequently these stories end in tragedy, and they suggest that a wastage of human potentiality is a vital ingredient of Tagore's tragic vision. An ironic reversal is another common device with Tagore, but when this is achieved by an obviously end-directed plot, the human outcome is considerably diminished. Finally, the paramount concern for women's position in society which features Tagore's work in every form of writing, is present in all the stories because they generally revolve around women in various predicaments of life. There are very few attractive males in Tagore's short stories, except for those untamed homeless boys for whom he has a special sympathy.

Though his stories had begun appearing in English translation in the *Modern Review* from December 1909,¹³ the earliest translations were done by Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay, then by others. It is not until five years later that we find him considering, at the instance of C. F. Andrews, the possibility of translating his own stories for publication abroad.¹⁴ But he was diffident about their reception as well as about his own ability, and wrote to Rothenstein, "Macmillans are urging me to send them some translations of my short stories but I am hesitating for the reason that the beauty of the originals can hardly be preserved in translation. They require re-writing in English, not translating. That can only be done by the author himself—but I do not have sufficient command of English to venture to do it."¹⁵ When a collection of stories did appear abroad the following year, there was only one translation by him and that also not of a genuine short story.

13. The earliest date listed in Pulinbehari Sen's bibliography. See above, note 6.

14. From letter to Rothenstein dated June 15, 1914 from Calcutta, *Papers WR*, no. 56.

15. Letter dated November 31, 1915 from Calcutta, *Papers WR*, no. 67.

The first collection in English, *The Hungry Stones and Other Stories* (1916),¹⁶ contained samples of Tagore's most successful work as well as the least successful, along with some work of indeterminate nature and accomplishment. Neither "Once There was a King"¹⁷ nor "The Kingdom of Cards"¹⁸ is a proper short story, while "The Victory"¹⁹—the only piece translated by Tagore himself—is the kind of romantic episode he sometimes treated in verse. "Vision"²⁰ has one of Tagore's rare happy endings, but it is brought about by incredible wifely devotion and a kind providence.

Among the better stories is "The Homecoming,"²¹ which is a good example of Tagore's probing into an ordinary domestic situation for unsuspected depths. "The Babus of Nayanjore"²² maintains a pleasant exterior, thereby heightening its ironic comment on a decayed social class. It is the only story by Tagore which has appeared in an American anthology.²³ "The Devotee"²⁴ is a later work than the others and reveals a more mature use of familiar material than before. The devotee may have renounced her family life and the ascetic may have her spiritual well-being in trust, but in the moment when he looks at her with different eyes as she emerges from her bath in the tank in wet clothes, both are betrayed as human beings.

The outstanding works in the collection are the title story, "The Hungry Stones,"²⁵ and the last story, "The Cabuli-

16. The selection covers a period of composition from 1891 to 1914.

17. Originally "Asambhab katha" (1893), translated by C. F. Andrews and the author.

18. Originally "Ekta ashade galpa" (1892), translated by C. F. Andrews and the author. Later dramatized as *Taser des** (1933).

19. Originally "Jaya-parajay" (1892), first translated by Jadunath Sarkar, present version by Tagore.

20. Originally "Dristidan" (1898), translated by C. F. Andrews and the author.

21. Originally "Chhuthi" (1892), translated by C. F. Andrews and the author.

22. Originally "Thakurda" (1895), translated by C. F. Andrews and the author.

23. See *The Bedside Book of Famous British Stories*, eds. Bennett Cerf and H. C. Moriarty (New York, 1940).

24. Originally "Boshtami" (1914), translated by C. F. Andrews and the author.

25. Originally "Kshudita pashan" (1895), translated by Pannalal Basu.

wallah.”²⁶ The former is a romantic fantasy woven round a deserted palace, haunted by sins and passions of long ago. The narrative treads the middle ground between romance and reality with great effect, creating an illusion and dispelling it without any strain. By choosing a locale in another part of India, the writer has made it remote from the Bengali reader, and by letting the story be told by a fellow-traveller in the wait between trains, the writer has not bound the reader to credulity. The original attains its magic through the sheer power of language ; the translation, inevitably, is at a lower key. “The Cabuliwallah” belongs to a different order altogether, because here the unifying force is that of a superstructure of human sentiment that is complete in itself and does not lead somewhere else. The relationship that springs up between the five-year-old girl, Mini, and the middle-aged fruitseller from distant Cabul does not need to be justified by reason, though the author has done so towards the end. The story is told by Mini’s father, who is a mere spectator, and yet through him the appeal reaches any father of a little girl anywhere in the world.

Mashi and Other Stories (1918) is an even more diverse collection than the first, but has a similar admixture of successes and mediocre achievements. The title story itself²⁷ is lamentably long and overcharged with emotional moments ; the hero, as depicted, deserves neither his aunt’s devotion nor his wife’s indifference, and the fact that he is about to die places an unnecessary burden on the story as a study of family relationships. The machinery of narration in “The Skeleton”²⁸ is more complicated than is warranted by the situation, while in “The River Stairs”²⁹ the writer has resorted to the subterfuge of making the inanimate stones speak and thus relinquished the responsibility of telling a story of guilty love. “Raja and Rani”³⁰ offers no more than one man’s caprice as the reason

26. Originally “Kabuliwala” (1892), translated by Sister Nivedita.

27. Originally “Sesher ratri” (1914), translated by W. W. Pearson.

28. Originally “Kankal” (1892), translated by Prabhat Mukhopadhyay.

29. Originally “Ghater katha” (1884), translated by Jadunath Sarkar.

30. Originally “Sadar o andar” (1900), translated by Keshabchandra Bandopadhyay.

for another man's sway of fortunes. "The Riddle Solved"³¹ suffers from the well-made plot that leaves no room for the story to make its own statement. The orthodox Hindu aristocrat's youthful involvement with a Muslim widow is a twist on the Hindu-Muslim theme that is extraneous to the main purpose of the story. "The Trust Property"³² is also weakened by its too exact justice, where the old miser unknowingly administers his own punishment. In contrast to this rather heavy-handed indictment of a cruel superstition, the deft manner in which Tagore has chastised a social system in "The Auspicious Vision"³³ is much more effective as literature.

On the credit side there is "The Postmaster,"³⁴ superior even to the earlier "Cabuliwallah," and perhaps Tagore's finest study of a relationship between two human beings that depends on no recognizable sentiment and yet is triumphantly right because both the child as well as the adult concerned here are so real as persons. The slight romantic flavour lent to the earlier story by the fruitseller's distant home is absent here. The very ordinariness of the village postmaster is his greatest claim to recognition, while Ratan's tragedy is apparent to nobody but she herself and to the reader. At a less exalted level of the author's creative sympathy are "The Elder Sister"³⁵ and "The Castaway,"³⁶ both studies of maladjustment between human beings. In both the affections are not guided by precedence nor motivated by any hope of returns, and this is the situation which shows Tagore's strengths as a storyteller to advantage.

Another kind of achievement is made by juxtaposing human nature and elemental nature in stories like "The Supreme Night"³⁷ and "Subha."³⁸ The latter is a particular

31. Originally "Samasya puran" (1893), translated by Prabhat Mukhopadhyay.

32. Originally "Sampatti samarpan" (1891), translated by Prabhat Mukhopadhyay.

33. Originally "Subhadristi" (1900), translated by the author.

34. Original with the same title (1891), translated by Devendranath Mitra. See allusion to the original post-master in Tagore's *Glimpses of Bengal*, pp. 22-3.

35. Originally "Didi" (1895), translated by Rashbehari Mukherjee.

36. Originally "Apad" (1895), translated by the author.

37. Originally "Ek ratri" (1892), translated by Jadunath Sarkar.

38. Original with the same title (1892), translated by Anathnath Mitra.

triumph of Tagore's art and could be ranked with his best stories. The material is identical with that of "The Auspicious Vision," but where the dumb girl in that story is a mere freak who flits in and out of the action to serve its needs, here Subha's speechlessness is her special asset in communing with nature and her tragic liability in the community of human beings. In Tagore's universe, the exclusion of one for the other is a violation of the principles of existence.

As a collection, *Mashi* is a continuation of *The Hungry Stones* and not an advance. The same lack of planning that we have noticed in Tagore's English career in poetry and drama can be seen here. Instead of preparing several volumes at the same time on a progressive scheme, each publication seems to have been prepared as if it would be the last. With the short stories, the availability of existing English versions has been a contributory factor to the uneven quality of the collections. Rather than make a selection of the original stories first and then have them translated, the selection has been made from stories which had already been translated. Consequently, what we have is not merely a motley of translation work but also a motley of taste.

Stories from Tagore (1918), which appeared immediately after *Mashi*, contained seven stories already published abroad in previous collections and two new stories translated by the author himself. The preface claimed that the volume was designated primarily as a text book for Indian students learning English. Of the two new stories, "The Son of Rashmani"³⁹ belongs to a group of stories dealing with the way of life of the *zemindar*, the landowning class of India which lived off the land without working on it. The gradual crumbling of this social class was a topical matter in Tagore's time, but this story is raised above topicality by the portrait of Rashmani, whose courage and constancy enable her to sustain her husband's delusions of grandeur as well as strengthen her son's determination to stake new claims of life for the impoverished family. In previous collections, stories like "The Babus of Nayanjore" (in *The Hungry Stones*) and "The Riddle Solved" (in *Mashi*) revolve around the theme of *zemindars* whom Tagore observes

39. Originally "Rasmanir chhele" (1911).

as a fading segment of Bengali society rather than as the inevitable result of economic change. That he himself belongs to this class explains the tone of regret with which he observes its disappearance, but because he belonged to it he also knows the reasons of its decline and never hesitated to expose them.

In the last collection, *Broken Ties and Other Stories* (1926), Tagore again makes the mistake of resorting to his earliest stock⁴⁰ of original stories instead of choosing from more recent work. Even the translations were slightly outdated, most of them having been done in 1916-1917, some separately and others jointly by W. W. Pearson and the author himself. In effect, therefore, we are presented in 1926 with translations which are about ten years old from original stories written more than twenty-five years back. Only the title story, translated from *Chatur-ranga** (1916), is of comparatively recent origin, but in the original it is generally classified among Tagore's novels.⁴¹ Two of the stories here, "In the Night"⁴² and "The Lost Jewels"⁴³ belong to another distinct group where Tagore uses the supernatural as the cause or the consequence of aberrations of human nature. "Mastermashai"⁴⁴ from *Stories from Tagore* also belongs to this group of stories, and the journalistic aspect of Tagore's career can be seen reflected in them. None of them attain the artistic accomplishment of "The Hungry Stones," and the supernatural element appears to have been introduced chiefly to heighten the immediate appeal of the incidents by a presentation of the novel and the unusual. The final story in this collection, "Emancipation," has no place among short stories, because it is merely the prose-paraphrase of the narrative poem, "Parisodh" from *Kahini*.*

Tagore's English career as short story writer really refers to his work only up until 1900, there being only four stories from after this period among those which were published abroad. He continued to write short stories in Bengali, though his production declined to only twenty-three stories between

40. The original stories were written between 1892 and 1898.

41. See following section of this chapter.

42. Originally "Nishithe" (1895).

43. Originally "Manihara" (1898).

44. Original with the same title (1907), translated by the author.

1901 and 1934. If a trend may be attributed to these later stories, it is their increasing preoccupation with social problems⁴⁵ whereas previously he had dealt mainly with human beings as affected by social problems. It may be noted that the nine novels written during this period gradually eliminate their social concern and lean towards minute analysis of character. Some of Tagore's other prose was devoted to satirical fables and sketches whose informal wit will never been transferable to another language. He had not written any short stories since 1933, when in the last two years before his death he startled Bengal's literary world by publishing three long stories.⁴⁷ These were so different from his earlier stories that it is difficult to consider them as part of his career as short story writer, and resemble more his later novels than any other work. All three develop their themes through ideological debate, and their human world is restricted to a circle of very articulate intellectuals. As in nearly all stories by Tagore, women occupy the focus of action ; but unlike any of his previous men, two of his latest heroes are scientists. "My occasional misgivings about the modern pursuit is not directed against Science, for Science itself can neither be good nor evil, but its wrong use," he had written to Gilbert Murray in 1934.⁴⁸ Perhaps the title of his last story, "Laboratory," epitomizes his faith in the proper use of science.

In introducing the short story to Bengali literature, Tagore performed a function that Washington Irving had done for American literature—namely, made short fiction popular and respectable as literary exercise. As in America, the short story has thrived in Bengal and been shaped by the necessities of periodical literature, and the rate of production of Tagore's own

45. The collection published in India, *The Runaway and Other Stories* (Calcutta, 1959), contains some of these "problem" stories. See the last story in this volume, "The Stolen Treasure," translated from "Chorai dhan" (1933) as an example of the later stories.

46. An attempt has been made in the collection, *The Parrot's Training and Other Stories* (Calcutta, 1944). Also see the "fables" section of *A Tagore Reader*.

47. Published together in the volume, *Tin sangi** (1940) not yet translated for wider publication.

48. *East and West* (The League of Nations, 1935), p. 34.

stories varied according to the degree of his association with magazines. In the American tradition of short stories, Tagore could be classified as a regional writer because so many of his stories are rooted in rural and semi-urban Bengal. Yet Hamlin Garland's definition of a local-colour story as one which could only have been written by a native of that region does not quite apply to Tagore. In spite of his close acquaintance with his particular region, he was only a visitor there over a number of years and not an original inhabitant. Thus the eternal verities rather than literal details of life in this region give substance to these stories. The regionalist experience was of considerable value to Tagore in disciplining his instincts as an artist, but he was a regionalist by chance and not by deliberate choice.

Tagore's regional writing has one connotation in multi-lingual India which would not apply at all to America—in writing Bengali stories, Tagore wrote about a region for people of that region, and could not hope to be read outside that region except in translation. Thus, nothing to parallel Bret Harte's stories about California causing a sensation in New York, or Mark Twain's Mississippi being taken into the heart of the entire nation, could ever happen in India. On the other hand, there was less scope for romanticizing remote people and places and a greater urge towards realistic writing. Tagore's haunted palace with its hungry stones had to be located not only far back in time but also far away in place. Otherwise, his locale was on both banks of the river Padma, and his people were familiar figures to any Bengali. Where realistic fiction is an outgrowth of the American local colour movement, in Bengali fiction through Tagore realism has turned writers to local colour literature.

Some other characteristics of American local colour writing shared by Tagore was a tendency to idealize the simple life, a special emphasis given to natural setting, and a nostalgia for certain ways of life that would no more be possible. In using the short story sometimes as a vehicle for social protest, Tagore paralleled another precedent known in America. But there is no specific American short story writer whose work can be compared to Tagore's work in this medium.

ii. Novels

Compared to his copious output in other forms of literature, the novel was Tagore's least productive outlet. He wrote only twelve novels, and these appeared at such irregular intervals that it is not easy to fit them into a career scheme to make a convenient base for discussion of Tagore as a novelist.⁴⁹ Most of his novels were written in serial form for monthly magazines, and they lack the formal finish that may have been achieved had they been written primarily as books. However, when they did appear later as books, the introductions Tagore furnished for some of them offer ready platforms of discussion.

The first two essays of *Personality* (1917), where Tagore talks about the nature of art and its relation to the nature of personality, seem to suggest that Tagore looked upon the process of artistic creation as one of unleashing the pent up energies of what he called the "Person." Such a theory would justify use of the novel form as occasional channels for periods of creative abundance, and would also explain "the uncertain engineering of his novels."⁵⁰ An overriding faith in the creative urge could only be sustained by ignoring the discipline of craft.

A totally different approach to Tagore's novels is to consider them as fictionalized statements of some of his attitudes to life and society in general, and India's present and future in particular, which appear frequently in his essays and lectures. This approach is supported by Tagore's apparent withdrawal from public life after 1905, and his subsequent pronouncements from time to time on the contemporary situation from the relative backwaters of Santiniketan.

A third approach is to view Tagore's achievement as the rapid advance of the Bengali novel from episodic romance

49. For critical discussions in English, see :

D. P. Mukherji, *Tagore—A Study*, Ch. IV.

S. C. Sen Gupta, *The Great Sentinel*, Ch. XI.

Sukumar Sen, *History of Bengali Literature*, (New Delhi, 1960), pp. 312-316.

Bhabani Bhattacharya, "Tagore as a Novelist," *A Centenary Volume*, pp. 96-101.

Niharranjan Roy, "Three Novels of Tagore," *Indian Literature*, IV 163-181.

50. D. P. Mukherji, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

to modern psychological fiction. The usual starting point of such a view is the work of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay,⁵¹ his immediate predecessor and considered the founder of the modern Bengali novel. Much of the critical commentary in Bengali on Tagore's novels is devoted to establishing how much he had derived from Bankimchandra and to judging in what measure Tagore had outstripped the older writer.

Unlike as in Tagore's career as poet or dramatist, as novelist there is not the same gradual artistic evolution. Instead, the novels are so many points of his career as writer specially illuminated by his having used the novel form at those particular points. Some characters have been repeated, some character-revealing situations have been worked over again, some emotional stands taken in different novels—especially by the women—are similar. Otherwise, the only continuity that can be traced through all the novels is the evolution of his prose style which grows increasingly flexible and becomes brilliantly evocative, almost existing by itself, in his late novels. Also the predominantly social context of his middle novels gives way steadily to greater concern with form and style. The stylistic evolution is impossible to convey in translations. The transitions in form-content relationship could not be studied in the period under review because all his novels had not been translated then.

The two historical romances with which Tagore began, *Bau-thakuranir hat** (1883) and *Rajarshi** (1887),⁵² are generally treated as being outside his main development as novelist. Two of the latest, *Dui bon** (1933) and *Malancha** (1934),⁵³ are too short and slight to be included in the main consideration. Out of the remaining eight, four were published abroad in translation and constitute his brief career as novelist in English. The order of English publication was not as different from the original order as his work in other genres—*The Home and the World* (1919) was originally Tagore's seventh novel, *The Wreck* (1921) his fourth, *Gora* (1924) his fifth; and *Broken Ties* (1926) sixth.

51. For a brief survey of this writer's work, see Sukumar Sen, *op. cit.*, pp. 232-238.

52. Neither has been translated into English.

53. Both now available in English, translated by Krishna Kripalani, as *Two Sisters* (Calcutta, 1945) and *The Garden* (Calcutta, 1956) respectively.

Thus, that portion of his work between 1903 and 1916 which established him as a Bengali novelist was fairly well represented in his English career.

The first published of the English versions received far more attention in America than the others which followed, and brought about a temporary revival of literary interest in Tagore.⁵⁴ This initial interest in Tagore as novelist declined sharply with the next publication, and three years later, *Gora*—Tagore's greatest novel, by general critical consent in India—was completely ignored.⁵⁵ Yet it had been heard of even before being published in English, for we find Robert Morss Lovett alluding to it in July 1921 : "It is to be hoped that it [*Gora*] will soon be translated and take its place among those intensive studies of personality which have been the greatest achievement of the twentieth century in fiction....."⁵⁶

In praising the universal appeal of *The Home and the World*, the *New York Times* was sure that Tagore had aimed this novel more at his readers abroad than at those at home.⁵⁷ When *The Wreck* was published without any mention that it was a translation, another reviewer described it as "a novel, a purely impersonal romance, of eastern people, places and events, written in English and so, of course, designed for the Western point of view."⁵⁸ The notion that Tagore wrote this novel in order to interpret India for the benefit of Western understanding was not only a misrepresentation, it led to expectations that the customs and values and motivations which Tagore was handling would constantly be explained and made accessible to his readers abroad. None of the English versions have more than a few footnotes explaining specific terms, and the context is so completely Indian that without some familiarity with the country, the ordinary reader abroad was unable to get much beyond grappling with the sheer strangeness of the context. "We are as much occupied with constructing for ourselves a clear conception of home life in Bengal," complained another reviewer,⁵⁹ as we are with grasping the psycho-

54. See above, Chapter three, section three.

55. Not a single review listed for American periodicals.

56. *New Republic*, XXVII, 225.

57. June 26, 1921, p. 16.

58. *Springfield Republican*, July 17, 1921, p. 7a.

logical study he gives us of the Eastern woman emerging from the seclusion of the zenana....."⁵⁹ While the subject matter remained baffling, there was neither a distinctive quality of language nor an originality in handling the novel form that could encourage the readers' interest. In the most fundamental ways, therefore, Tagore's novels failed his English-speaking readers.

Yet, if these translations have any enduring value to the foreigner, it is in their quality as social documents, in their having preserved in an art form the uneasy tremors of a society plunged into inevitable transition. By concentrating on the physical drives, the emotional sanctions, the intellectual dilemmas that motivate human conduct rather than on recording exterior circumstances of Bengali life, Tagore is said to have opened new frontiers of Bengali fiction. But this very introspection is typical of the growing self-consciousness of the educated middle-class elite in Bengal at the turn of the century. The tireless scrutiny of motives which Tagore turns upon the characters of his earlier novels—which, in his later novels, they turn upon themselves—is as true of the spirit of the times as it is in accordance with the dictum announced by Tagore in his introduction to the novel *Chokher bali** (1903): "The new mode in literature consists not in a recording the sequence of events, but in the extraction by analysis of their innermost reasons."⁶⁰ With the composition of this novel⁶¹ Tagore is credited with having introduced modern psychological fiction in Bengali. It would be more to the point to credit him with the artistic instinct that made him turn to an art form eminently suitable to the material.

The Brahmo-samaj movement was another social reality of the time which stimulated and divided the middle-class which Tagore depicts in his novels. Intellectual in inception, the Brahmo-samaj became a movement for religious as well as social

59. *Boston Evening Transcript*, July 9, 1919.

60. Translated. From introduction to the novel, *Rachanavali*, III.

61. First appeared in the *Bangadarshan* magazine during 1902-03. Now available in English as *Binodini*, trans. Krishna Kripalani (Bombay, 1950). For an outsider's view, see J. D. Anderson, "Chokher bali: Rabin-dranath Tagore as a Novelist," *Asiatic Review*, ns II (July 1913), 57-70.

reform in its operation—preaching monotheism as directly derived from the Upanishads on the one hand, on the other advocating the need for a universal human society which would release men from their inheritance of caste and women from their bonds of domesticity. The more conventional Hindus were thoroughly opposed to such relaxation of time-honoured definitions, and the long drawn out Brahmoism vs. Hinduism debate continued, at least in Bengal, well into the twentieth century. The debate informs the background of *The Wreck* and occupies nearly all the conversation in *Gora*. Tagore himself belonged to the Brahmo-samaj, and his artistic integrity is severely tested when he drew on such a large canvas as in *Gora*.

In Bengal of the early twentieth century, the religious and social debate spilled over into political action, and a novel like *The Home and the World* deals with the intellectual justification behind one phase of the Indian struggle for political independence. If the concept of nationalism was the outcome of contact with European thought, anti-British sentiment was a supplementary growth which steadily came to represent nationalistic fervour. One reaction was a turning back to the ancient and glorious past, accompanied by the aggressively orthodox Hinduism which held European culture in supreme contempt. Another direction, and one especially favoured by the younger generation, was the growing worship of power as derived from the indigenous cult of *shakti*, which would lead to the overthrow of the foreign ruler by violence. Organized opposition to British rule at first manifested itself in acts of denial—like the boycott of foreign goods in favour of indigenous products, known as the *Swadeshi* movement—and later developed into acts of terrorism. Tagore had never believed in the efficacy of negative action, and both *The Home and the World* as well as the later novel, *Char adhyay** (1934), use the political unrest as vital background of the human drama enacted by his characters.

If man's quest for life's truth has been a staple material for the novelists' art, Tagore has examined this quest as relevant to Indian culture. *Gora**, though its locale is Bengal, is designed to be a discovery of India, where the search for individual identity leads to a concept of the universal man

which transcends definitions of caste, race and nationality. A similar search gives unity to the otherwise fragmentary nature of *Broken Ties*, where the main character tries one after another the three traditional paths to salvation—through knowledge, through devotion, and through work. Even *Char adhyay**, otherwise considered Tagore's indictment of political terrorism, suggests that human beings must pay the penalty of violating human nature, or conversely, that only such life is true which is lived according to a true fulfilment of human nature. It would be an injustice to Tagore the novelist to read too many Indian pilgrims in progress in his novels, but we are often given human approaches to ideas which appear in their most intellectualized aspect in his philosophical tracts.

The Home and the World (1916), Tagore's first novel to appear in English, was translated by his nephew, Surendranath Tagore, from *Ghare-baire** (1916) which was serialized in the *Sabujpatra* magazine during 1915. Tagore prepared the Bengali text for publication in book form just before he left for Japan in May 1916 en route to America for the second time.⁶² Thus the novel was not written as the immediate result of his experience of the western world in America, though the publication of the English version in 1919 may have some indirect relation to the post-war stringencies in anti-sedition legislation by the British government in India. The English title is slightly misleading in its antithetical balancing of "the home" against "the world." A more literal translation of "Ghare-baire" would be "Inside the home and outside," and as portrayed by Tagore, this "outside" is only a special phase of political unrest and not a permanent opposition of "the home." Tagore used the Swadeshi movement to bring his heroine out of domestic seclusion, because here was a historically valid wind of change that blew through even cloistered Bengali households. Yet even E. M. Forster was deluded by the term "world" and found "it proves to be a sphere not for 'numberless tasks', but for a boarding-house flirtation that masks itself in mystic or patriotic talk."⁶³ The components of the world are not impor-

62. See *Rabindra-jibani*, ii, 445.

63. Review in the *Athanaeum* (August 1, 1919), p. 687. Also in his collection of essays, *Abinger Harvest* (London, 1936), pp. 320-321.

tant here, because the novelist's prime concern here is with the bringing out of Bimala.

Even while the original novel was appearing in instalments, a woman reader wrote to Tagore asking in some indignation what was the purpose of the novel, whether the plot had been fabricated by the novelist or was it in any way related to a real happening, and if it was a real happening did it take place in "an orthodox Hindu household or in some privileged, western-educated family?"⁶⁴ These questions will give an idea of the nature of the outcry raised by this novel in Bengal, and Tagore was moved twice to write defences in which he derided his critics for judging a literary work by other than literary standards. Yet his strong opposition to the neo-patriotism of young Bengal was well-known and the hopes and fears of the idealistic Nikhil in this novel were too similar to his own not to invite charges that Tagore was using literature as propaganda.

Such a charge would be difficult to deny if Nikhil were the hero of this novel. As soon as we recognize the importance of Sandip in the story, it is clear that Sandip is the most vital character in it. It is not Nikhil but Sandip who lures Bimala out of her security, and it is in her realization of what Sandip stands for that her education is completed. As a recent Bengali critic has suggested, when Sandip puts his own photograph next to Nikhil's in the double frame owned by Bimala (pp. 72-73), it is the author's way of telling us that Bimala needs all that both men have to offer because each possesses what the other lacks.⁶⁵ Sandip is the only real "villain" created by Tagore, and much of Tagore's personal dislike of such self-seeking revolutionaries has gone into making a successful characterization. Both he and Bimala are alive enough to destroy the popular allegorical interpretation of the novel in which Nikhil represents traditional India, Sandip stands for modern Europe, and Bimala is modern India torn between those two extremes. Such an interpretation would make a happy ending of Bimala's return to her husband, but actually it is Bimala's tragedy that her brief taste of the "world" has made meaningless the "home" to which she must return.

64. Translated. From notes, *Rachanavali*, viii, 521-530.

65. See Pulakesh De Sarkar, *Rabindranather upanyas* (Calcutta, 1961), p. 69.

Each of the three major characters narrates the story by turns, so that what we have is a series of monologues through which the reader must view the characters as well as the incidents. Translation takes away the individualized tone of voice of each character, but the technique is proof of Tagore's consciousness about a form suitable to his kind of story telling. By using the monologue in order to analyse his characters, he solves the problem faced by him in *Chokher bali** where he has to be the omniscient, omnipresent author, and also improves upon the method of *Gora** where the author has to devise long and protracted conversations between two persons or discussions in larger groups. The multiple narration insures Tagore against his greatest weakness as a novelist—namely, his inability to contrive a natural sequence of events without resorting to chance meetings, misplaced letters, and unfounded conjectures. In this novel, the narrative framework falters only towards the end where a sudden rush of events accelerates the story to a climax, compelling the narrators to report immediate happenings rather than ruminate upon them afterwards. The incessant introspection makes for slow reading, and the tendency to self-dramatization in each character sometimes gets exaggerated. But it is essentially a successful method which places the characters at a distance and offers a perspective to the reader for watching the outer world of political revolution through the inner world of temperamental conflict.

The Wreck (1921) is an example of Tagore's earlier work and may be held responsible for ruining any prospect he might have opened with his first English novel. The second is under a handicap from the very beginning because the situation which makes the story possible is brought about through a highly calculated accident. A large portion of the author's energy is spent thereafter in repairing the cracks in the credibility of the initial accident, while several other chance circumstances are required to bring the story to successful fruition. All too often characters have to stand by while the next twist in the plot advances the story. It was a bad choice as translation to further Tagore's English career because the original of *The Wreck*, *Naukadubi** (1906), is rated lowest among Tagore's novels in Bengali. It marked a definite retrogression from *Chokher bali** where Tagore had innovated a new conception of fiction

and also challenged the traditional disregard of women as individuals. In *Naukadubi** he relapses to the episodic romance manner, and ends up by upholding the sacred power of Hindu marriage which unites two strangers in inviolable bonds. The only interest *The Wreck* has for the Tagore student is in its foreshadowing of the greater work to come. Characters like Hemnalini and Ananda Babu, the use of debate in the guise of conversation, the Hindu-Brahmo differences—all these are carried over from *The Wreck* and given much fuller treatment in *Gora** (1910) which retains its title in the English version.

Tagore began writing the original *Gora** in 1907 and worked at it for over two years, the *Prabashi* magazine printing each instalment as it came in for thirty-two consecutive issues. Apparently the size of the story was to justify the generous prepayment by the magazine,⁶⁶ but when completed it became the first novel in Bengali “which mirrors faithfully the social, political and cultural life of the entire educated Bengali middle class, as it was during the turn of the century.”⁶⁷ This was Tagore’s most ambitious work in any literary form, the nearest he ever became to undertaking something on an epic design. Just prior to this he had retired from the turmoil of Calcutta into serious but peaceful school-mastering at Santiniketan, obtaining the necessary respite as well as remoteness from the centre of unrest in order to study it and his own reactions to contemporary Bengal, before committing himself to print on such a large scale. Dhurjatiprasad Mukherji has said that this novel is a search for social reality amid everything made uncertain and unreal by political agitation, and “the personal counterpart of this search was the author’s identification with the activities of the school at Santiniketan.”⁶⁸ The discipline imposed by a daily routine may be seen in the way Tagore erected a large structure in this novel and set about filling it in painstaking detail.

The young man who gives the novel its name dominates the work not only with his unusual personal presence, but with his insatiable appetite for disputation. Debate constitutes almost the entire body of the novel, and it sometimes outweighs the forward movement of the story. But instead of remaining

66. See *Rabindra-jibani*, ii, 234.

67. Niharranjan Roy, *Indian Literature*, IV, 170.

68. *Tagore—A Study*, p. 40.

on an abstract plane of mere discussion, the issues are always translated to the level of human intercourse. Thus Gora's idealized notions of service to the motherland are rapidly demolished when he first enters a village. Sucharita's experiment in independent living is sadly marred by Haramohini. Paresh Babu's allegiance to the Brahmo-samaj is shaken when its members gang up to revile him. And the theme overhanging all the debate—where is the true India to be found that it may be worshipped—is finally resolved in the conduct of Anandamayi. She is the only idealized character in the whole story and she serves her function admirably, both as the human counterpart of the motherland-image, as well as the point of climax of the story where the novel attains its fullest significance.

The even-handed justice with which Tagore deals with the Hindu-Brahmo conflict is another conspicuous achievement of the novel. Paresh Babu may be a spokesman of the very best that there is in Brahmoism, but his is a shadowy influence over the course of events, suggesting that his inner contentment is of no particular value to the rest of society. The other Brahmos like the "enlightened" Barodasundari or the campaigning Panu Babu fare badly at Tagore's hands, and underlying them is the author's own disappointment with the Brahmo-samaj as a movement. The Hindus, of course, have always been an easy target for Tagore's satire and in choosing what appears to be a Hindu hero, Tagore set himself a delicate artistic problem.

Gora finally emerges as Tagore's concept of universal man, but the device by which the realization of his own universality comes to Gora is the most serious weakness of the novel, a defect basic enough to endanger the whole structure. When Anandamayi tells him that he is not the high-born Hindu Brahmin he has always believed himself to be but the child of Irish parents left in Anandamayi's care, the very foundation of Gora's whole philosophy of life is removed. But in another sense, it is a reprieve, and he can now offer himself to "that Deity who belongs to all, Hindu, Mussulman, Christian and Brahma alike..... He who is not merely the God of the Hindus, but who is the God of India herself !" (p. 407). Nothing short of a drastic blow like that could have released Gora from his imagined inheritance, and transformed him to a state where he can attain his full potentiality, but the delayed disclosure works against

the convincing pattern of the rest of his characterization. In the last analysis, however, it is not Gora's transformation which is of paramount importance, because the novel ends without his new life having begun. The real miracle took place long ago when the orphaned Irish infant was received into a Hindu household. The author plainly tells us this : "From the day she (Anandamayi) had taken Gora in her arms she had entirely cut herself away from tradition and custom..... she (had) gradually become accustomed to ignore the dictates of her social circle and to follow simply her own nature" (p. 175). But this is said too early in the novel for us to realize its significance then.

In a way, Gora's transformation had begun by this time, and the month he spends in jail sees him emerge as a more complex and human person than the tiresomely single-minded Hindu and patriot he had been ever since the story began. A Bengali critic has aptly said that Gora's incarceration was necessary not only for the magistrate in the interests of law and order, but also for the novelist so that he can proceed with the story unhampered by Gora's endless talk.⁶⁹ During Gora's absence (pp. 148-260), the Binay-Lolita subplot takes clearer shape, Sucharita's conversion to an independent outlook on life begins, and Haran takes up arms against Paresh Babu's apparent indifference to the conduct of his daughters. This ability of the novelist to release energy in so many directions shows he is aware of the novel's larger demand as the portrait of a whole society in action and not of a single individual.

Ultimately, neither institutions nor ideas prevail, and human nature triumphs. This settled conviction of Tagore's about the power of the human heart to transcend all barriers of man's own making permeates all of Tagore's mature work, though he never again delineated it as human drama on such extensive scale and proportion as in *Gora*. Instead he turned to the mystic vision of the *Gitanjali** lyrics and the inward search of the symbolic Plays, and did not write a novel in the next eight years. When he did return to the novel form, his concept of the novelist's art had undergone a radical change.

69. See Biswapati Chaudhury, *Kathasahitye Rabindranath* (Calcutta, 1961). pp. 65-71.

*Chaturanga** and *Ghare-baire**, both published as books in 1916, mark this change in Tagore's career as novelist. The latter, translated into *The Home and the World*, has already been discussed. The English version of *Chaturanga** appeared six years later as the title-story of the collection, *Broken Ties and Other Stories* (1926). This was his last novel to be published abroad in translation in our period, leaving his English career as novelist suspended in the middle of change. The content of *Broken Ties* looks back to *Gora*. Again it is a story of spiritual growth and fulfilment, but told only in its important phases : neither the social background nor the transition from one phase to another is detailed. The technique is contemporaneous with that of *The Home and the World* in its attempt to frame a story-telling device that will enable the author to leap the transitions in Satish's career. "There was a day," Satish explains, "when I relied wholly on reason, only to find at last that reason could not support the whole of life's burden. There was another day, when I placed my reliance on emotion, only to discover it to be a bottomless abyss" (p. 97). But Satish's self-discoveries are revealed to us as narrated by Srivilas who is the focus of consciousness in all four sections of the novel. Srivilas participates in the action, and except for a few occasions when he has to reproduce a piece from Satish's diary or learn of a particular happening from Damini, the device of the narrator -in-action is Tagore's most interesting experiment with form. In actual construction, however, the novel is uneven. The early training of Satish under Jagamohan is necessary to his later career, but the fullness of Jagamohan's portrait is unnecessary in view of his abrupt removal from the story. Similarly, Damini attains a lively reality that puts Satish in the shade and makes their relationship unbalanced. Of course, Satish finally transcends Damini's world and the justly famous scene of attempted seduction is presented entirely in masterful metaphor. The spurning of Damini enables both her and Satish to attain their real roles in life, and, within its severely restricted space, *Chaturanga** embraces as much of the universal as the much larger novels of Tagore.

Of the remaining five novels, *Jogajog** (1929) is the most noteworthy because had its projected design of a family saga through three generations been completed, it may have become

Tagore's greatest novel. The first two instalments appeared in the *Bichitra* magazine under the title *Tin purush**, which literally means "three generations", but the name was changed to *Jogajog** from the third instalment⁷⁰ and the original scheme must have been abandoned at this point. As the novel stands now, it starts with the birth of the third generation, retreats to summarizing the history of the first generation, then tells only of the second generation. If intended to be only about the second generation, the essential action has a disproportionately long introduction and an abrupt ending. The promise of the novel, however, cannot be hidden by its shapeless mass. By pitting the wholly irreconcilable Madhusudan and Kumudini against each other, Tagore has achieved greater realism in human conflict than ever before, while as representatives of two divergent social orders they constitute the clash between the newly rich commercial class and the impoverished landed aristocracy with an intensity Tagore had not seemed capable of in fiction. For the first time, structural symbols appear in the narrative fabric to offer a new kind of unity to the plot,⁷¹ and no philosophy or moral principle ever obtrudes. In a remarkable feat of creative duality, Tagore was writing *Sesher kavita** (1929)⁷² almost simultaneously. This novel started as a satire against young Bengal's fashionable rejection of anything that was old, but the highly romanticized version of the spirit of youth presented here betrays that Tagore had remained to admire what he had come to scoff. It was like a gesture of challenge to those who were about to superannuate him and a demonstration that he could be as young in spirit as the next writer though he was nearly seventy. As a love story it is entirely unreal, but its stylistic brilliance has preserved it as the favourite reading of Bengali youth even today. One wonders if Tagore had not become so absorbed in writing *Sesher kavita**, would he have completed the ambitious plan of *Jogajog**.

With *Char adhyay** (1934) Tagore stirred his last controversy with a novel, because here he rejected political terrorism as a

70. See *Rabindra-jibani*, iii, 336. The novel has not yet been translated.

71. See Umashankar Joshi, "The 'Bird' Image in *Jogajog*," *Indian Literature*, IV (1961), 121-128.

72. Now available in English as *Farewell, My Friend*, translated by Krishna Kripalani (London, 1948).

self-defeating philosophy more decidedly than ever before. The ruthless picture he drew of violence is unbalanced by his very partisanship, but as a story apart from its thesis, the doomed love of Ela and Atin is the closest he came to portraying physical passion without the camouflage of metaphor or the pretext of psychological study. As preface to the first edition of the novel in book form, Tagore told the story of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay—a Catholic Vedantist, an associate of Tagore at Santiniketan, and later a radical journalist—and how he confessed to Tagore that he had fallen in his own esteem in having turned a propagandist for violence. This preface was fiercely criticized as Tagore's attempt to prejudice the reader even before he had read the novel. Though Tagore wrote a characteristic defence against this charge, the preface was dropped in later editions.⁷³

The novel was translated immediately afterwards and we find Tagore writing in March 1935 to Amiya Chakravarty, who was then in England, "Your literary friends must have seen the English version. I would like to know what they think of it purely as literature..... If you think that critics there think it merely passable, or even less, then don't let it be published."⁷⁴ The journal of the American Asiatic Association, published from New York, serialized it from December 1936 to March 1937 as a "novelette of young India,"⁷⁵ but this did not contribute to Tagore's English career as novelist which may be said to have terminated in 1925, with the English version of a novel he had written in 1916.

If James Fenimore Cooper, the "American Scott", is America's first major novelist, then Tagore shares with Cooper an influence at one remove, because Tagore began writing novels on the model of the work of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay who has been called the "Scott of Bengal." Bankimchandra's influence on Tagore extended beyond the two historical romances with which Tagore began his career, but it is in these works that the influence is most clearly seen. The parallel between

73. See notes, *Rachanavali*, xiii, 541-545.

74. Translated. From letter quoted in *Rabindra-jibani*, iii, 509.

75. See *Asia*, XXXVI, 765 to XXXVII, 309.

Later published as a book, *Four Chapters*, translated by Surendranath Tagore (Calcutta, 1950).

Cooper and Tagore can be drawn a little further. After *The Spy* (1821) and *The Pilot* (1824), Cooper struck this original vein in the Leatherstocking novels, but later used the novel for purposes of social criticism. After his two adventures in Bengal history, Tagore also found his true metier and the social context of his novels is an important ingredient of his worth as a novelist. There is, however, no resemblance between them as actual writers.

A much closer resemblance can be seen in some of the work of William Dean Howells. Both pioneered the technique of realism in the novel in their own literatures, and Tagore no less than Howells believed that the novel must be true to "the motives, the impulses, the principles" that shape the lives of actual men and women. Tagore did not formulate a definite doctrine as Howells did, but Tagore's *Chokher bali** was as advanced a modern instance as Howells' novel of that title. Like Marcia Gaylord among Howells' women, Tagore's Binodini is his most successful and living portrait of a woman. As contemporary phenomena, the Laphams and the Dreyfooses interested Howells in the same way that the Ghoshals had interested Tagore in *Jogajog**. Where Howells' overtures towards a socialistic pattern in society reflect his concern with the future of America, Tagore's emphatic rejection of violent revolution indicates his anxiety about the perils facing Bengal and India.

Both Howells and Tagore depended heavily on their mastery of prose style as a prime mover in fiction, and the knowledge of the "feminine oversoul" that insured Howells' popularity can also be attributed to Tagore, whose women are almost always better drawn than his men. Both were equally limited in their practice of realism as a novelistic technique, and their achievements in the novel have been equally obscured by the subsequent advance of naturalism in fiction.

Tagore did not profess any particular theory of the novel, but the prefaces he wrote for his novels are primary sources for his ideas about the novel form. In this he was as fortunate as Henry James in getting the opportunity to cite his own work as demonstration of his notions about the art of fiction. Of course, Tagore never approached the novel with the high seriousness of James and no comparison between their artistic concerns is feasible. But there is a marked departure in Tagore's career from his earlier work towards novels which concentrate

more and more upon a "richly responsible" and "finely aware" central consciousness through whom the pattern of the story is revealed. *Dui bon** and *Malancha** are highly self-conscious if unsuccessful essays in manipulations of the point of view, but Tagore did not persevere with the technique long enough for it to be claimed as integral to his art as novelist. The peculiar quality of Tagore's genius did not lend itself to the kind of industry and application necessary for a great novelist, but no account of Tagore as writer can be complete without a proper place being given to his novels in his entire literary output.

OTHER PROSE

"If one did not 'care for his poetry,' the presence of his prose was overwhelming," says Buddhadeva Bose¹ in grateful acknowledgement of the debt all Bengali-speaking Indians owe Tagore. Some idea of the enormous quantity of Tagore's prose writings available to the Bengali reader may be gathered from the fact that, apart from the fiction and excluding numerous booklets and printed pamphlets, Tagore's other prose ran into sixty-nine published titles at the time of his death.² Back issues of English-language periodicals in India carry many translations³ but only a fraction of the total mass has been published in books in India or abroad. In America during the period under review, this aspect of Tagore's work was presented in only nine volumes.

The sheer bulk of Tagore's other prose requires proper classification before a discussion can begin, yet its variety makes it difficult for proper categories to be formulated and maintained. Formal divisions—such as autobiography, letters, travel journals, literary essays, and essays on other subjects—suffice only up to a point, besides making very unequal portions. The last category, for example, would have to embrace a profusion of topics from the realization of God to the teaching of English in primary schools. As for form, books calling themselves letters, like *Yurop-prabasir patra** (1881) or *Rasir chithi** (1931),⁴

1. "Renaissance along the Ganges," (rev. article) *Saturday Review*, XLIV (May 13, 1961), 21 +

2. Since then, seven volumes of letters, four new collections of essays, and several new selections of prose have been published.

3. The bibliography compiled by Pulinbihari Sen and Sobhanlal Ganguli for the Tagore Centenary number of *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (May 1962) includes all Tagore's prose writings in English (originals as well as translations) published in this periodical.

4. These titles would literally translate as "Letters of a Resident in Europe" and "Letters from Russia."

The latter has been published in translation in the volume, *Letters from Russia* (Calcutta, 1960).

turn out to be journals or essay-sequences, while professedly travel-diaries tend to omit facts about the travels, as in *Japan-yatri** (1919) or *Paschim-yatrir dayeri** (1929).⁵ Very often these journals contain Tagore's most acute observations on literature, while his essays on art or criticism develop into speculations about the divine spirit in the universe. The facility with which he could cross barriers of form has already been pointed out while discussing his work in accepted literary genres ; in his occasional prose, he showed himself to be even less inhibited. Along with this freedom came the impulse to create tour de forces of form like *Panchabhut** (1897),⁶ in which five characters who represent five different points of view discuss art and aesthetics and ethics through long conversations in a novelistic setting.

In accordance with his concerns as a man and not merely as a writer, Tagore's prose could be classified according to subject matter—thus : education, economics, politics, social reform, art, literature, religion.⁷ But there is no guarantee that Tagore's discursive mind will not traverse more than one subject at a time, or that his manifold concerns will not appear to him as related in ways not immediately apparent to others. For example, in Tagore's world view, the greatest happiness attainable by man was realization of his kinship with divinity ; in the urge accruing from this realization, man creates art, and it is the business of the critic to judge whether the artist has given expression to this creative joy. This is an oversimplification of the processes elaborately traced by Tagore in several essays,⁸ but this is the way Tagore can inter-relate—in this case—religion, artistic creation, and critical theory. To take another example, Tagore was convinced that India's subjection to British rule would be perpetuated until Indians learned to help themselves.

5. Both now available in translation as *A Visit to Japan* (New York, 1961) and *The Diary of a Westward Voyage* (Bombay, 1962).

6. Nearly all the essays from this volume have appeared in translation over a period of years in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*.

7. Essays on the first four subjects have now been collected, in translation, in the Tagore Commemorative Volume Society publication, *Towards Universal Man* (New Delhi, 1961), with an introductory essay on Tagore's prose writings by Humayan Kabir.

8. See "What is Art ?" (*Personality*, New York, 1917), *The Religion of an Artist* (Calcutta, 1953), and "The Artist" (*The Religion of Man*, New York, 1931).

Instead of constitutional agitation, therefore, he called for the mobilization of popular forces for constructive work. Tracing India's misery to the decline of her villages, he outlined a programme of rural reconstruction through voluntary, cooperative effort that would ensure social freedom and economic self-sufficiency. Again, a comprehensive view enabled him to link up politics, economics and social reform in the same sweeping vision.⁹

A third approach to Tagore's variegated prose would be to notice the occasions and opportunities he had for writing it. This would also give an idea of how fully he participated in the life of his times. His lifelong association with various Bengali periodicals,¹⁰ sometimes as editor and sometimes as chief contributor, provided him with a permanent outlet for ideas. Nearly all his polemical writing appeared in periodicals before being collected in books,¹¹ and though the urgency of issues being controverted have passed with time, the essays record a consistent point of view from which the turmoil was observed. Many of these essays were, in fact, composed as speeches for special audiences and as public addresses, and gained their significance from the specific occasions at which they were delivered.¹² This explains the oratorical style employed in these pieces, a general strain of exhortation instead of thoughtful argument, and frequent reiteration. At the other extreme, we have Tagore's expositions of religious concepts and discussion of the scriptures. These, too, were written in order to be spoken, first at Brahmo Samaj gatherings and later to his students at Santiniketan, but instead of disputation, these are interpretations and elaborations

9. See essays in *Greater India* (Madras, 1921).

10. None of these are in publication today : *Bhurati*, *Balak*, *Hitabadi*, *Sadhana*, *Bangadarshan*, *Bhandar*, *Tattwabodhini Patrika*, and *Sabujpatra*.

11. For example, *Alochana** (1885), *Raja o praja** (1908), *Kalantar** (1937).

12. Thus, when the British authorities threatened to declare illegal any politically organized protest against the internment of Mrs. Annie Besant, a strong advocate of self government for India, Indian politicians were prevented from giving expression to mass resentment ; but Tagore voiced the public reaction in his 1917 address at Calcutta, "Kartar ichhaye karma," later included in *Kalantar**.

Translated as "Thou Shalt Obey" for *Modern Review* (September 1917), the address appears as "The Master's Will Be Done" in *Towards Universal Man*.

of a shared body of belief. His autobiographical writing—whether in letters or in journals or in actual attempts at autobiography—also passes from combination to combination of urgency and occasion and density of subject matter. The *Chhin-napatra** (1932) letters had not been written for publication, and they have a spontaneity not always present in the letters of *Pathe o pather prante** (1938), which are self-consciously rendered accounts, planned not merely to keep in touch with the person they were written to but also to communicate with a larger audience. Similarly, it is not just the large interval nor merely the difference in the writer's maturity that so widely separates *Yurop-jatrir dayeri** (1891) from *Japan-yatri**, and both of them again from *Rasiar chithi** ; instead, it is the need for writing that is different and shapes the writing in each case. Even his literary criticism is invariably coloured by the context it appears in—exacting and combative in articles to appear in magazines, relaxed and indulgent in letters and journals.

These various approaches will prove that the amount of Tagore's prose available in the nine English volumes neither indicated the important part played by Tagore in contemporary Indian affairs, nor did it offer adequate evidence on which to assess Tagore's role as other than literary artist. A total understanding of Tagore is seriously hampered if his prose writings are underestimated.

Just as the unexpected popularity of *Gitanjali* had influenced Tagore's reputation as a poet in English, so did the early success of his first translated prose, *Sadhana* (1913), determine his impact upon those who read his prose in English translation. Yet it was almost by accident that Tagore should have elected to share this aspect of his intellectual concerns with Americans. When the Unitarian minister at Urbana invited him to speak at the local Unity Club during Tagore's first visit to the United States, he was able to accept readily because he had with him an English rendering of his address, "Bisva-bodh," originally delivered at the 1909 *Maghotsav*, the annual winter assembly of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj.¹³ This appears as "The Realization of the Infinite" in *Sadhana*. Two other essays in the book, "Soul Consciousness" and "Realization in Action," were among

13. *Rabindra-jibani*, ii, 232 and 335.

Tagore's talks at Urbana, and these too were rendered from the 1910 *Maghotsav* addresses entitled "Atma-bodh" and "Karmayog." In fact, all seven essays were adapted and translated from previous material, and Tagore makes this clear in his preface : "I should add perhaps that these papers embody in a connected form, suited to this publication, ideas which have been culled from several of the Bengali discourses which I am in the habit of giving to my students in my school at Bolpur in Bengal."¹⁴

While preparing the English versions of these discourses during his stay at Urbana, Tagore confessed to Rothenstein, "It has not been [sic] task for me to express my thoughts in English, especially thoughts which are not familiar to the audience here."¹⁵ But their reception at Urbana encouraged him to repeat these lectures in Chicago and at Harvard ; following their American success, he delivered the same talks in a series at the Caxton Hall in Westminster, London. According to Ernest Rhys, "they had a profound effect on their hearers,"¹⁶ and Tagore decided to have the lectures published. It will be recalled that earlier in the year, Tagore's modest hopes of publication had referred to "my children's poems and some of my plays."¹⁷ The events of the succeeding six months had obviously enlarged his horizon. *Sadhana* was published in October 1913, and with the Nobel Prize being awarded to Tagore in November, the volume was reprinted eight times in the next twelve months.

Sadhana promoted Tagore from poet to philosopher in the eyes of readers in England and America, because it seemed to offer intellectual justification for the poetry of *Gitanjali*. Tagore had explained in his preface to *Sadhana* that "the subject matter of the papers published in this book has not been philosophically treated" (p. vii), and the frankly religious standpoint adopted

14. pp. viii-ix.

A number of unconnected passages from the same source were translated by Tagore for the volume, *Thought Relics* (1921).

15. Letter dated December 2, 1912, *Papers WR*, no. 16.

Some typewritten copies of these essays in their first English version are in this collection.

16. *A Biographical Study*, p. 115.

17. Letter to Rothenstein dated January 16, 1913, from Urbana. Quoted above, Chapter Four, note 17.

by him makes it practically impossible for any philosophical system to be extracted and treated as being distinct from the religious faith. The contemporary critical discussions¹⁸ swayed between accepting Tagore's statements as supreme mystical wisdom and dismissing them as too highly individualized a cosmic belief to be taken seriously.¹⁹ Yet *Sadhana* is no more than a personal statement. It neither preaches a religion nor does it evolve a philosophy. It merely speculated upon the various ways in which man can realize the presence of the divine spirit in his own life, on the presumption that such realization is possible. To illustrate this thesis, Tagore offers nothing more than his own experience and his own interpretation of verses from the Upanishads.

It must be remembered that the *Sadhana* lectures, in their Bengali form, originated in an atmosphere where a common ground of faith already existed between speaker and listener, and the speaker's main purpose was interpretive rather than persuasive. In transferring these ideas to foreign soil, Tagore failed to take into account that this basis of fundamental agreement would be lacking. He had trouble enough suiting such concepts as *atma*, *chitta*, *vyakti*, into awkward English equivalents like 'Self,' 'Consciousness,' 'Personality'; he neglected to ensure that the ideological basis of these concepts was adequately clear to his new audiences before they could understand and judge his interpretation. This was an omission Tagore never successfully repaired in all his transmission of ideas to the West. When he impressed, it was generally due to the passion of his own convictions and his fluency in conveying them, rather than because of superior logic and convincing argument. For the reader of today, *Sadhana* may either be read as an aspect of Tagore's spiritual autobiography, or because there is "no better introduction to the Upanishads, especially for Westerners, than the works of Tagore."²⁰

It is relevant to note here that the attempt to organize Tagore's

18. See reviews cited above in Chapter Three.

19. For two notable attempts to reconcile extreme views, see an address to the Chicago Literary Club by Edwin Herbert Lewis, *The Work of Tagore* (Chicago, 1917), and an article by John Haynes Holmes, "The Religion of Rabindranath Tagore," *Bookman*, XLIV (March 1917), 73-78.

20. Helmut G. Callis, "Rabindranath Tagore : India's Message to the Modern World," *Western Humanities Review*, XIV (Summer 1960), 312.

ideas into an acceptable system of thought began in India soon after it was attempted in the West, and in some ways as a reaction to Western attempts.²¹ A number of Western thinkers attributed Tagore's apparent freedom from stereotypes of Hindu belief to his absorption of principles of Christianity, and this provoked Indians to try to establish the purely Indian origin and derivation of Tagore's thought. A scholarly study by India's foremost modern philosopher, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (who is now the president of the Indian Republic), entitled *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore* (London, 1918), pioneered such work. In it he claimed : "In interpreting the philosophy and message of Rabindranath Tagore, we are interpreting the Indian ideal of philosophy, religion and art, of which his work is the outcome and expression."²² The book has had successors in India amplifying this thesis,²³ but its own subsequent career is instructive. After one reprint, the author did not allow a third impression until 1961, when a new edition was issued in response to popular demand, this being the centenary year of Tagore's birth. The author's own explanation for neglecting the book—".....I felt that the work was based on the English writings of Tagore and the translations of his Bengali works. To comment on a writer when I could not read him in the original seemed to me somewhat unfair....."²⁵—is a precaution to be heeded by all who read Tagore in translation.

Tagore himself fought shy of being regarded as a philosopher.

21. See S. G. Dunn, "Modern Bengali Mystic," *Quarterly Review*, CCXIX (July 1913), 167-178 ; J. W. Scott, rev. article, *Hibbert Journal*, XII (July 1914), 919-926 ; W. S. Urquhart, "The Philosophical Inheritance of Rabindranath Tagore," *International Journal of Ethics*, XXVI (April 1916), 398-413 ; Richard Herbertz, "Philosopher or Mystic ?" *Living Age*, CCCX (July 16, 1921), 155-159, rep. from *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (May 1921) ; Percy Thomas Fenn, Jr., "An Indian Poet Looks at the West," *International Journal of Ethics*, XXXIX (April 1929), 313-323 ; A. C. Underwood, *Contemporary Thought in India* (New York, 1931), Ch. x ; Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and Its Development* (New York, 1936), Ch. xv.

22. Preface, p. ii.

23. Among those in English are : V. S. Naravne, *Rabindranath Tagore : A Philosophical Study* (Allahabad, India, 1947) ; Surendranath Dasgupta, *Rabindranath, the Poet and the Philosopher* (Calcutta, 1948) ; Benoygopal Roy, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore* (Bombay, 1949).

24. Published by Good Companions, Baroda, India.

25. Introduction to the third edition (1961), pp. vi-vii.

When Dr. Radhakrishnan completed his book and requested Tagore to write an introduction for it, Tagore declined saying, ".....about my philosophy I am like M. Jourdain who had been talking prose all his life without knowing it."²⁶ And later when one of his essays was included in the volume, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (London, 1936),²⁷ edited by Radhakrishnan and J. S. Muirhead, Tagore wrote to the former, ".....the poet in me feels ill at ease in the company of philosophers who, I am sure, will find it difficult to tolerate the intruder....."²⁸ Radhakrishnan's book is generally criticised for having overstressed the Upanishadic elements of Tagore's thought, but it clearly demonstrates that an approach to Tagore's ideas can only be through understanding his religion.²⁹ In later life, Tagore drew away from institutionalized religion of any kind³⁰ but remained a steadfast believer in what he was to call "the religion of man."

Tagore's next two prose works, *Nationalism* (1917) and *Personality* (1917), were published after his 1916-17 tour of Japan and the United States, and contain the lectures delivered on this visit. Of the two, the lectures of *Nationalism* had drawn more attention, and the book deserves some special consideration. As with *Sadhana*, the genesis of *Nationalism* explains much of its subject matter. According to Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay, Tagore wrote the papers later to be collected in *Personality* on his way from India to Japan in May 1916, but the lectures of *Nationalism* were written during his stay in Japan, and are a direct outcome of his disapproval of the excesses in the name of nationalism he saw all around him in his three months there.³¹

26. Quoted *ibid.*, p. v.

27. The piece representing Tagore is "The Religion of an Artist," originally an address at the University of Dacca in February 1926. It has been published separately and an extract is reproduced in *A Tagore Reader* (1961).

28. Letter dated November 23, 1936. Quoted in the introduction, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore* (3rd ed. ; Baroda, 1961), p. ix.

29. For a recent discussion, see Amiya Chakravarty, "Rabindranath Tagore and the Renaissance of India's Spiritual Religion," in *Modern Trends in World Religions*, ed. Joseph M. Kitagawa (La Salle, III, 1959).

30. See Tagore's statement, translated as "My Religion," in *A Tagore Testament* (1954).

31. *Rabindra-jibani*, II, 456, 466-467.

He did not hesitate to speak his mind while in Japan, in the two lectures "The Spirit of Japan" and "The Message of India,"³² because in his eyes this form of nationalism was the extension of a European evil which Asia must avoid. He saw the European war as the inevitable consequence of this evil and warned Japan against similar doom.

When Tagore read the first draft of these speeches privately to C. F. Andrews in Japan, Andrews had pointed out that Tagore had confused the two terms "nation" and "state."³³ The confusion is betrayed in Tagore's definition in *Nationalism*—"A nation, in the sense of the political and economic union of a people, is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose" (p. 9)—and his attack is plainly aimed not at nationalism itself but at the predatory imperialism practised by European nations against what he called the "No-Nations" of Asia. As he explained to Rothenstein: "The rapid growth of nationalism in Europe begins with her period of exploration and exploitation. Its brilliance shines in contrast upon the dark background of the subjection of other peoples. Certainly it is based upon the idea of competition, conflict and conquest, and not on that of cooperation."³⁴ The polarities set up by him—the aggressive and insatiable West, the defenceless and peace-loving East—are exaggerated to a point where historical developments are ignored and political thought overcome by humanistic vision. It is only by reducing the polarities to Britain and India that Tagore's indictment can be seen in its proper perspective, because Britain had clearly prospered as a nation at the expense of India and clearly had no intention of letting India achieve nationhood then.

Judged merely on the evidence of *Nationalism*, Tagore's political thought seems undeveloped. But placed against the stands taken by him in Indian politics, the totality of his political

32. Combined as "Nationalism in Japan" in *Nationalism*.

Tagore's views on Japanese nationalism are even more clearly stated in the correspondence between him and the Japanese poet, Yone Noguchi, published as "Poet to Poet," *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, (November 1938). Also reproduced in an appendix by Shakti Dasgupta, *Tagore's Asian Outlook* (Calcutta, 1961).

33. *Rabindra-jibani*, II, 467.

34. Letter dated October 26, 1917, from Calcutta, *Papers WR*, no 74.

view becomes clearer. As stated by Sachin Sen, "Tagore's political ideals sprang from the idealist theory of the State and the dynamic view of social cooperation owing obedience not to any specific organ of coercion but to the moral instincts of Man."³⁵ In Tagore's view of his country's history, India's national destiny was the achievement of communal harmony amid diversity, and he did not consider political independence a superior goal than this. His 1904 address on "Swadeshi Samaj"³⁶ distinguished between the state (then identified with the British Government of India) and the community in order to declare that progress for his countrymen lay in so developing the community that it would be able to exercise the functions of the state and not have to depend upon the will of state officials. At the only political conference over which he ever presided,³⁷ he argued that a merely political programme would not lead to India's liberation, nor could this be brought about by emotional outpourings in denunciation of the British. He opposed both the *Swadeshi* movement of 1905 as well as the Non-cooperation movement of the 1920's as being negative in inspiration, and his ideological difference with Mahatma Gandhi³⁸ form an important strand of ideas of India's modern history. The two remained great friends despite their differences and in naming Tagore "the Great Sentinel," Gandhi accorded him his right place in the Indian political scene. By going against the popular tide, Tagore brought to bear a severely critical view upon situations clouded to others by their participation, while he remained a free agent to make any decisions dictated by his own conscience. Tagore's entire social thinking subsumed his merely political

35. *The Political Thought of Tagore* (Calcutta, 1947), p. 97.

36. Translated as "Our Swadeshi Samaj" for *Modern Review* (April 1921) and included in *Greater India*. Appears as "Society and State" in *Towards Universal Man*.

37. The Pabna session of the Bengal Provincial Conference in 1908. Probably the first essay of Tagore's to be translated, appeared as "One Nationalist Party" in *Greater India*. Appears as "Presidential Address" in *Towards Universal Man*.

38. Two important essays indicating these differences are "Satyera awbhan" of August 1921 and "Swaraj sadhan" of September 1925, both collected in *Kalantar** (1937). First translated for *Modern Review*, both now appear as "The Call of Truth" and "The Striving for Swaraj" in *Towards Universal Man*.

stands, because "it was a synthetic philosophy which viewed life's processes as a unitary phenomenon embracing the whole range of human activity."³⁹

Personality is a collection of essays rather than exposition of a single theme, and so is *Creative Unity* (1922), which was published after his third trip to Europe and America in 1920-21. It has been argued⁴⁰ that the six essays of *Personality* expand the view of "personality" suggested by Tagore in the second piece, "The World of Personality," while in *Creative Unity* the aims set up in the essay "The Creative Ideal" are pursued in the other pieces.

But such thematic consistency is not so much in the essays themselves as it is in the world-view already expressed by Tagore in *Sadhana*. In the two succeeding volumes, the same world-view is applied to more specific areas of human activity—for example, in art, religion, education, family life, international relations—but the integration of man and nature and God remains basic to all these activities. What is new in these volumes is that most of these essays were composed in English, and there is greater ease and clarity in the use of language and of terminology than there was in *Sadhana*. Written mainly as speeches to foreign audiences, there is a greater willingness to meet them on common ground. Thus we find Tagore quoting Whitman in "The World of Personality" (*Personality*), and expatiating on Christ's notion of peace in "The Modern Age" (*Creative Unity*). In both books there is an essay each on woman, and this must be a concession to the feminine majority of his American audiences. At the same time, the constant endeavour to present the Indian point of view to contrast the Western leads Tagore to make claims on behalf of his country which relate to a poetic rather than a realistic view of India. The propagandistic element that only faintly tinges *Sadhana* is quite obtrusive here, as is the air of a prophet, a mediator between two worlds. By extension, the culture he represented provided the intermediary element, and in interpreting the East to the West, Tagore frequently misrepresented Europe while he pictured an idyllic India that did not always appeal to even his own countrymen. When in

39. Sasadhar Sinha, *Social Thinking of Rabindranath Tagore* (Bombay 1962), p. 4.

40. See *Rabindra-jibani*, II, 482-483 ; III, 88.

denouncing nationalism he asserted that India was not a nation, he denied the surge of nationalism that had begun to shake India at her very foundations in the early years of the twentieth century. Yet in glorifying the ancient ideals of his land, in polemical prose as he had already done in narrative verse, Tagore contributed to what may be regarded as a renaissance of cultural ideals so badly needed by a subject people. And in the final analysis, Tagore's vision of Indian history, however debatable historically, was built of universal rather than parochial values.⁴¹

Some of the essays in these two volumes deal with subjects that were of a lifetime's concern to him at home, but are sketchily represented in his English prose. Thus, "What is Art?" (*Personality*) is his first enunciation of a theory of art, but already in the discussions presented in *Panchabhut** (1897) he had offered interpretations of art as "otherness, or transcendence, and as an added intimacy with the nature of daily reality,"⁴² and in the lectures discussing literature collected as *Sahitya** (1907) he had considered art as total expression. Later in his career he became more concerned with art as form and his taking to painting in old age may be considered a consequence of his search for "pure form." Neither his poetics nor his aesthetics were made available to the reader abroad in his lifetime, while his critical principles can scarcely be deduced from such broad statements as in those two essays of *Creative Unity*, "The Poet's Religion" and "The Creative Ideal." Much of his literary criticism was written in explication of his own literary practice, but the essays collected in *Adhunik sahitya** (1907) and *Prachin sahitya** (1907) are early examples of his practical criticism, while *Sahityer pathe** (1936) demonstrates he had remained alert to modern critical trends without losing touch with his roots in Indian classical theories of literature.⁴³

41. A translation of his well-known essay, "Bharatvarser itihaser dhara," was published in the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (April 1923) as "The Vision of India's History" and has also been issued separately in 1951. It is reproduced in the section "On India" in *A Tagore Reader* (1961), along with other essays on India.

42. Amiya Chakravarty, in section on "Art and Literary Criticism," *A Tagore Reader* (1961), p. 225. This section includes examples of Tagore's critical essays.

43. For a brief summary in English of Tagore's critical theories, see

Among other areas of omission are his ideas on education, outlined only once in the essay "My School" (*Personality*), although by 1917 he had already had sixteen years of practical experience as an educationist, and as early as 1892 had made his first appeal for reorganising Indian education to fulfil Indian needs.⁴⁴ "The Spirit of Freedom" (*Creative Unity*) is directed more at his countrymen than to foreigners, and urges that freedom can only come from within and not from external changes ; the essays published in 1908 in collections like *Raja o praja**, *Swades**, *Samaj**, *Samuha**, and the later collection *Kalantar** (1937), are all devoted to defining India's needs and devising solutions to them. "An Eastern University" (*Creative Unity*) is ostensibly an appeal for assistance to Visva-Bharati, but is backed by a vision of Asian unity which he had preached in and brought back from trips to China, Japan, and other countries of South-eastern Asia.⁴⁵ "East and West" (*Creative Unity*) appears to be an invitation to the West to make a new discovery of the East but here again is only the germ of the grand design that Tagore's maturing intuition had predicted—namely, that the West needed the East no less than the East needed the West, and the solution of the world's problems lay in an internationalism born not of political expediency but emerging from a voluntary and mutual inter-penetration of values.⁴⁶

When we turn from these volumes of essays to *My Reminiscences* (1917), *Glimpses of Bengal* (1921), and *Letters to a Friend* (1928), we move from Tagore in public postures to a far more intimate and accessible Tagore. In spite of their pronounced

M. M. Bhattacharjee, *Rabindranath Tagore, Poet and Thinker* (Delhi, 1961), pp. 121-134, or Hiranmay Banerjee, *How Thou Singest, My Master !* (Calcutta, 1961), pp. 17-32.

44. In "Sikshar herfer," a paper read at a public meeting in Rajsahi (now in East Pakistan). Translated as "Topsy-turvy Education" for *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (Nov. 1945-Jan. 1946), appears as "The Vicissitudes of Education" in *Forwards Universal Man*.

Also see *Rabindranath Tagore : Pioneer in Education* (London, 1961) for essays by Tagore.

45. See Hiralal Seth, *Tagore on China and Japan* (Lahore, India, n.d.) ; Kalidas Nag, *Tagore and China* (Calcutta, 1945) ; Shakti Dasgupta, *Tagore's Asian Outlook* (Calcutta, 1961).

46. This view may be seen reflected in *East and West* (The League of Nations, 1935), an exchange of letters between Tagore and Gilbert Murray.

subjective approach, the essays were addressed to foreign listeners and readers ; these latter volumes seldom have more than an audience of one, frequently no other than the author himself. All three belong to the genre of autobiographical writing—although only *My Reminiscences* resembles such a description formally—and in the absence of a proper autobiography, the three together offer the only record we have from Tagore of his life up to 1921. At the same time, Tagore's prose in these volumes is nearer to creative writing than it is in the essays where the prose is a vehicle of ideas.

With regard to chronology of composition, *Glimpses of Bengal* comes first, because its original, *Chhinnapatra** (1912), contains letters written between 1885 and 1895. When published in Bengali, the selection was made to look like a journal by leaving out the names of persons to whom the letters were addressed as well as of persons to whom references had been made. The English version is a further selection from the *Chhinnapatra** material, but the process of eliminations has left the texture of writing unimpaired. Here we have the early Tagore, in the full exuberance of young manhood, as yet untouched by the sense of duties and responsibilities that seem to burden his subsequent writing, especially in prose. These letters reflect the years Tagore devoted to managing the family estates in the countryside, where his mind and eye came in contact with a new world, and the freshness of his impressions are conveyed as soon as formed on page after page. The river Padma, on which he lived and travelled, dominates the whole book like a living character. Nature is in constant attendance, both in the foreground of the writer's musings and in the background of his observation. Next only to nature, rural life in its vital but subtle aspects is of endless fascination to the city-bred Tagore, and the unwavering sympathy for Man that characterizes all his mature work must surely have learned its first lesson here. Bengali critics unanimously agree that *Chhinnapatra** contains Tagore's finest prose ; even if that quality has been lost in translation, *Glimpses of Bengal* remains an indispensable source-book for the study of Tagore's real emergence as poet, his early short stories, and all his social thought.

My Reminiscences is a translation of *Jiban-smriti** (1912) which was published in the same year as *Chhinnapatra**, but

*Jiban-smriti** was written after 1910 and is about the twenty odd years of Tagore's life before the *Chhinnapatra** period.⁴⁷ Thus the last line of *My Reminiscences*, "So having escorted them to the door of the inner sanctuary, I take leave of my readers," really leads on to *Glimpses of Bengal*. There is no real continuity in the two books and their difference in circumstances of composition must be kept in mind for an assessment of their comparative qualities. The letters of *Glimpses of Bengal* were written at no other urge but that of self-expression, and at a time when—in Tagore's own words—"under the shelter of obscurity, I enjoyed the greatest freedom my life has known."⁴⁸ The author of *My Reminiscences*, though not yet of international fame that was soon to come, is already well known as the foremost writer of his language, an active political and social figure, a maker and moulder of public opinion. The book is his utterly self-conscious attempt to explore his own moral and intellectual beginnings in order to explain himself better to his admirers. The notion that he should do this was apparently initiated by the editor of the newspaper, *Bengalee*, for whom Tagore wrote a brief biographical sketch in the form of a letter.⁴⁹ Thereafter he began writing the original *Jiban-smriti*.*

The work turned out to be what its English title implies, a series of reminiscences and not a factual autobiography. Though it begins early enough in Tagore's life, it does not bring the account up to the time of writing it, stopping short around 1885. On the first page Tagore explains what he has done here—"painting pictures and not writing history"—and in this task the book is eminently successful, whatever it might lack as autobiography. Obviously, the author portrays only such memories as have stayed with him or seem significant to him now nearing his fiftieth year. The continuity of an inner life is maintained in spite of numerous references to persons, places, and events, and the account is valuable as information and commentary, if not as analysis. The comments on contempora-

47. Both books were translated into English by Surendranath Tagore and this gives a similarity to the English prose of these two volumes.

48. Introduction, *Glimpses of Bengal*, p. vi.

49. *Rabindra-jibani*, II, 265.

This letter is reproduced in translation in the notes to *A Tagore Testament*.

ries and family members have proved useful to critics in tracing influences. The first four parts are particularly important because they relate to a comparatively less known period of Tagore's life. A year before his death, Tagore returned to the early part of this period in the other admittedly autobiographical account written by him, *Chhelebelā** (1940).⁵⁰

Letters to a Friend advances Tagore's life by another eight years. All the letters are addressed to C. F. Andrews, and some relating to Tagore's 1920-21 trip abroad were published in India as *Letters from Abroad* (Madras, 1924). In preparing the later volume, Andrews added letters dated back to 1913, arranged the selection in chapters interspersed with explanatory comment, and prefaced the material with two introductory essays.⁵¹ The volume is of some sentimental value to Tagore students, because, edited by C. F. Andrews and dedicated to W. W. Pearson, it is an enduring testimony to the bonds that had drawn together these three men to the service of fellowmen.

All the letters were composed in English, and this offers an interesting contrast to Tagore's use of the language in the volumes discussed earlier in this chapter. Even granting that they are written to a close friend and that Andrews must have remedied any lapses of grammar, the language is more crisp and strives less for effect than in those volumes. There is very little of the circumlocution that had obscured meaning earlier, while Tagore's predilection for imagery is under better control. Consequently, the large number of subjects dealt with in these letters are all strengthened by discussion instead of being diffused beyond recovery. Perhaps Tagore's obvious confidence in Andrews enabled him to be so downright and candid in expressing opinions. The letters from July 22, 1920 (p. 87) onward, occupying half the book, reveal Tagore's mind on Indian affairs more clearly than in most of his English essays on political subjects. Compared to *Glimpses of Bengal* there is less artistry in *Letters to a Friend*, but the writer of one only occasionally resembles the writer of the other. The two volumes are perfect exam-

50. Translated by Marjorie Sykees for *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (August and November, 1940), then published in book form as *My Boyhood Days* (Calcutta, 1940).

51. The first essay had appeared as "Tagore and the Renaissance in Bengal" in *Contemporary Review*, CIII (June 1913), 809-817.

ples of the opposite limits between which Tagore as a letter-writer may be placed and judged, though the middle space would be occupied by varieties of personal letters which are not available in English.⁵²

The final volume of Tagore's English prose in this period, *The Religion of Man* (1931), consists of the four Hibbert Lectures delivered at Oxford in May 1930, arranged into fourteen chapters under separate headings. In one sense the book is a return to the original strain of *Sadhana* in another, a compendium of all his addresses in the religious-philosophical strain. As at Urbana in 1912, here also he reverts to the role that had devolved upon him then by the force of circumstance. The book may also be regarded as a special kind of autobiography, summing up the religious experiences of a lifetime. Though he lived for another ten years after this, he never made another so comprehensive a statement again about his religious life. Here he has offered, as he says, "the evidence of my own personal life brought into definite focus" (p. 7).

"The idea of the humanity of our God, or the divinity of Man the Eternal" (p. 17), is the theme of this book. It is by no means a new thesis for Tagore, but here he has ordered it into a discernible sequence and established it on broader bases than before. Where the earlier statements had generally quoted the authority of the Upanishads, with occasional references to Christ or Buddha, now he ranges farther afield into Indian folk literature, the simple faiths of itinerant Hindu and Muslim minstrels, even into the religious traditions of Iran. The word "religion" too, has been used in its original Sanskrit sense to signify natural and inevitable property, and not dogma or ritual or even code of conduct. Thus in speaking of the "religion" of man, Tagore is really speaking of what, in his opinion, constitutes man. Throughout the book, therefore, the line of argument is not from a set of principles towards the subject of man, but from man towards principles. By doing this Tagore is able to assert the primacy of man and avoid the limitations of accepted doctrines. These essays, incidentally, were composed in Eng-

52. *Chithipatra**, the seven volumes of Tagore's collected letters in Bengali, resemble *Letters to a Friend* in organization because the letters have been arranged not by date but according to persons they were written to. For example, the first volume only contains letters written to his wife.

lish⁵³ and later adapted into Bengali for a series of lectures to the Calcutta University, and published as *Manuser dharma** (Calcutta, 1933).

Tagore's prose published abroad, therefore, is mainly of two kinds—oratorical and autobiographical, of which the former made the greater impact. While listening to him speak in Chicago in 1913, Edwin Herbert Lewis had felt that it was listening to a speech by Emerson.⁵⁴ This places Tagore in a familiar, nineteenth century American tradition of lecture-essays. But by the time Tagore came to America, the tradition had ceased to be central to American intellectual life. The other kind, his autobiographical writings, began to be published just after his reputation in America as writer had passed its peak. Had it appeared a little earlier, it would have offered insights into his creative work and made it seem less novel, more real. As for the mass of prose writings that remained undiscovered by foreign readers, it would have provided a more complete view of one who, as man and artist, had lived more fully than most men.

53. In a letter to Clarence Pickett dated April 8, 1930, from Cap Martin, Tagore mentions : "I am having a quiet time in this beautiful part of France writing the Hibbert lectures....."—*AFSC Papers*.

54. Cited in *Rabindra-jibani*, ii, 338.

APPENDIX A

AMERICAN REVIEWS OF TAGORE'S BOOKS*

Gitanjali :

- Current Opinion*, March 1913, pp. 236-237.
- Nation*, May 15, 1913, p. 500.
- New York Times*, November 30, 1913, p. 671.
- New York Times*, January 25, 1914, p. 40.
- Outlook*, January 3, 1914, pp. 43-44.

The Gardener :

- Nation*, November 20, 1913, p. 485.
- New York Sun*, November 29, 1913, p. 26.
- New York Times*, November 30, 1913, p. 712.
- Outlook*, January 3, 1914, pp. 43-44.

The Crescent Moon :

- Nation*, December 4, 1913, p. 541.
- New York Times*, January 25, 1914, p. 40.
- Outlook*, January 3, 1914, pp. 43-44.
- Review of Reviews*, January 1914, p. 117.

Sadhana :

- Independent*, July 27, 1914, p. 136.
- Literary Digest*, March 21, 1914, p. 636.
- Nation*, December 4, 1913, p. 541.
- New York Sun*, December 6, 1913, p. 9.
- New York Times*, January 25, 1914, p. 40.
- Outlook*, April 11, 1914, p. 817.
- Review of Reviews*, January 1914, p. 117.

Chitra :

- Bookman*, October 1914, p. 205.
- Boston Evening Transcript*, July 29, 1914, p. 21.
- Nation*, May 21, 1914, p. 611.
- New York Times*, March 22, 1914, p. 129.
- Review of Reviews*, April 1914, p. 503.

The Post Office :

- Bookman*, October 1914, p. 205.
- Boston Evening Transcript*, July 29, 1914, p. 21.
- New York Times*, July 5, 1914, p. 301.

The King of the Dark Chamber :

- Dial*, January 16, 1915, p. 48.
- Independent*, November 16, 1914, p. 244.
- Nation*, November 12, 1914, p. 585.
- New York Times*, February 14, 1915, p. 49.

*Only significant reviews have been listed.

Songs of Kabir :

New York Times, February 14, 1915, p. 49.

The Hungry Stones and Other Stories :

Boston Evening Transcript, November 22, 1916, p. 5.

Brooklyn Eagle, December 2, 1916.

Dial, November 30, 1916, p. 468.

New York Times, November 5, 1916, p. 465.

North American Review, January 1917, p. 149.

Review of Reviews, December 1916, p. 679.

San Francisco Chronicle, November 26, 1916.

Springfield Republican, November 25, 1916, p. 7.

Fruit-Gathering :

Boston Evening Transcript, November 11, 1916, p. 7.

Review of Reviews, December 1916, p. 671.

Springfield Republican, December 24, 1916, p. 13.

"The Bolpur Edition," 10 vols. :

New York Times, December 10, 1916, p. 541.

Stray Birds :

Springfield Republican, January 14, 1917, p. 15.

The Cycle of Spring :

Catholic World, November 1917, p. 247.

Independent, September 29, 1917, p. 512.

Nation, August 16, 1917, p. 176.

New York Call, April 29, 1917, p. 14.

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- Literary Review*, December 10, 1921, p. 255.
New York Times, December 11, 1921, p. 3.

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APPENDIX B

ITINERARY OF TAGORE'S VISITS TO AMERICA*

First visit : 1912-1913.

New York —arrived from England (October 27) with Rathindranath and Pratima Debi ; stayed at Herald Square Hotel.

Urbana, Ill.—arrived (November 1) ; stayed with Prof. Morgan Brooks, while Rathindranath and Pratima stayed with Prof. Arthur Seymour, until the Tagores rented a house at 508 West High Street ; invited to speak at the Unity Club by the Unitarian Minister, Albert R. Vail ; spoke on "World

*This itinerary has been made as complete as possible, but some minor gaps remain due to lack of information.

- Realization" (November 10), "Self Realization" (November 17), "Realization of Brahma" (November 24), and "The Way of Action" (December 1).
- Chicago —arrived (January 22) ; stayed with Mrs. Harriet Moody at 2970 Groveland Avenue ; spoke on "Ideals of the Ancient Civilization of India" at the University of Chicago (January 23), on "The Problems of Evil" at the Unitarian Hall, and on the same topic at the Abraham Lincoln Center (January 26).
- Rochester, N. Y.—arrived (January 29) to attend the Congress of the National Federation of Religious Liberals ; met Prof. Rudolph Eucken of the University of Jena, then Exchange Professor at Harvard ; address on "Race Conflict" at the afternoon session (January 30) in First Universalist Church.
- New York —stayed at Hotel Earle until arrival of Mrs. Moody from Chicago ; accompanied by her, left for Boston.
- Boston, Mass.—arrived (February 13) ; stayed at Felton Hall, Cambridge, Mass. ; lectures to Prof. James Houghton Woods' philosophy class on "The Problem of Evil" (February 14), "Man's Relation to the Universe" (February 17) and "Realization of Brahma" (February 19) ; spoke to Philosophical Club, Harvard (February 18), and to the Andover Divinity Club, Harvard (February 19 evening) ; met Ellery Sedgwick, Josiah Royce.
- New York —stopped for a few days en route to Chicago.
- Chicago —arrived from New York (February 26) ; stayed with Mrs. Moody ; met Arthur J. Todd.
- Urbana, Ill.—arrived from Chicago (March 10) ; stayed for about three weeks.
- New York —arrived from Urbana *via* Chicago ; left for England (April 1913).

Second visit : 1916-1917.

- Seattle, Wash.—arrived on the "Canada Maru" from Japan (September 18), accompanied by W. W. Pearson and Mukul Dey ; stayed at New Washington Hotel ; lecture on "The Cult of Nationalism" to members of the Sunset Club in the afternoon (September 25) ; repeated lecture to public same evening.
- Portland, Ore.—arrived (September 26) ; same evening spoke on "Nationalism" in the Lincoln High School hall under the auspices of the Drama League of America ; spent next day (September 27) in motor trip along the Columbia River Highway, also visited Washington Park.
- San Francisco —arrived (September 30) ; stayed at Palace Hotel ; lecture on "Nationalism" in Colonial Ballroom of St. Francis Hotel (October 2) ; spoke to a Japanese audience in Scottish Rite Hall (October 3) ; reception by members of the

- Bohemian Club (October 4) ; incident with local Indians (October 5) ; same evening appeared at Columbia Theater, read from short story and play ; attended concert later that evening and met Paderewski.
- Santa Barbara, Calif.—lecture on “Nationalism” in the Little Theater, Montecito (October 6) ; spent next day (October 7) relaxing on the beach.
- Los Angeles — arrived (October 7) in the evening ; stayed at Hotel Alexandria ; visited (October 8) orange groves ; lunch at Glenwood Mission Inn, Riverside, stayed on until evening service at the Inn and read a poem from *Gitanjali* to guests ; lecture on “The Cult of Nationalism” (October 9) in the Trinity Auditorium under the auspices of the Cumnock School of Expression ; visited (October 10) Pasadena for the day at the invitation of the Department of English, Throop College of Technology, and spoke on “Nationalism” at a high school auditorium ; visited (October 11) San Diego for the day as guest of G. S. Davidson, president of the San Diego Exposition, and spoke to members of the Isis Club ; second appearance in Los Angeles (October 12) at the Trinity Auditorium, gave readings.
- Salt Lake City—arrived (October 14) ; same afternoon lecture on “Nationalism” at the University of Utah in the Assembly Hall in the Tabernacle Grounds ; refused press-interviews (October 15) but two reporters entered his room in Hotel Utah posing to be city dignitaries.
- Denver, Colo.—arrived (October 16) ; same afternoon lecture on “Nationalism ;” interviewed (October 17) by local newsmen.
- Chicago —arrived (October 20) ; stayed with Mrs. Moody, lecture on “The Cult of Nationalism” in Orchestra Hall (October 24).
- Indianapolis —spoke on “Nationalism” (October 30) in the Riley Room of the Clayton Hotel under the auspices of the Ona B. Talbot Fine Arts Association ; returned to Chicago.
- Ames, Iowa —came from Chicago at the invitation of the Iowa State University ; spoke to students and read poems, returned to Chicago.
- Milwaukee, Wisc.—spoke (November 4) on “Nationalism” at the Fabst Theater under the auspices of the Little Theater Group ; met Mme. Montessori.
- Louisville, Ky.—spoke (November 6) on “The World of Personality” at Macaulay’s Theater ; stayed at Seelbach Hotel ; on the way to Nashville (November 7) interviewed on the train by Nashville *Banner*.
- Nashville, Tenn.—spoke (November 8) on “Nationalism” at Vendome Theater under the auspices of the Centennial Club.
- Cincinnati, Ohio —gave readings (November 9) at Lyric Theater under the auspices of the Drama League.

- Detroit** —arrived (November 10) ; spoke same evening on "Nationalism" at the Board of Commerce Auditorium under the auspices of a committee of citizens for the benefit of the Rescue Home ; spoke (November 12) at the First Unitarian Church ; left (November 13) for Cleveland.
- Cleveland** —spoke (November 14) on "The World of Personality" at the Twentieth Century Club ; private reception (November 15) at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. John L. Severance.
- Toledo, Ohio** —spent day (November 17).
- New York** —arrived (November 18) ; stayed with Dr. E. W. Peterson ; lecture on "The Cult of Nationalism" (November 21) at Carnegie Hall under the auspices of the Society of Ethical Culture ; lecture on "The World of Personality" (November 23) at the Hudson Theater under the auspices of the League of Political Education ; visited Philadelphia for week-end, gave readings at Ogontz School for Girls (November 25) ; spoke on "Nationalism" at the Academy of Music under the auspices of the Brooklyn Institute.
- Paterson, N. J.** —spoke on "Nationalism" (November 28) at Orpheus Hall under the auspices of the First Unitarian Church.
- Philadelphia** —lecture on "The Cult of Nationalism" (November 29) at the Academy of Music.
- Boston** —gave readings (December 1) at Wellesley College ; spoke on "What is Art ?" (December 4) at Mount Holyoke College ; lecture on "The Cult of Nationalism" (December 5) at Tremont Temple, Boston.
- New Haven, Conn.** —gave readings (December 6) in Woolsey Hall under the auspices of the Yale Dramatic Association ; presented with the Yale Bicentennial Medal.
- Northampton, N. Y.** —spoke on "Santiniketan" (December 7) to Smith College students in John M. Greene Hall ; left for New York.
- New York** —appeared in St. Andrews Church (December 10) for panel discussion of "What is the greatest safeguard against temptation ?" along with Lyman Abott, Oscar Strauss, Arthur Brisbane, and Mischa Applebaum ; gave readings (December 12) at New Amsterdam Theater.
- Pittsburgh, Pa.** —lecture on "The Cult of Nationalism" (December 13) at Carnegie Music Hall under the auspices of the Drama League of America.
- Cleveland** —lecture on "The Cult of Nationalism" (December 16) at Gray's Armory ; planted tree in Shakespeare Garden.
- Chicago** —stayed for a few days ; no public engagements.
- Urbana, Ill.** —arrived (December 22) ; spoke on "Personality in Art" (December 24) at Unitarian Church ; spoke to the Tagore Circle on "The World of Personality" (December 25), on "The Second Birth" (December 26) ; gave readings (December 27) at house of Prof. Jacob Kunz ; lectures at

Morrow Hall on "Santiniketan" (December 28), on "Nationalism in the West" (December 29), on "Nationalism in India" (December 30) ; left (December 31) for Chicago.
 Lincoln, Nebr.—spoke on "Nationalism" (January 8) and gave readings at the Oliver Theater.
 Des Moines, Iowa—spoke on "Nationalism" (January 9).
 Omaha, Nebr.—spoke on "Nationalism" (January 10) and gave readings in the Fontenelle Hotel.
 Colorado Springs.—sightsceeing trip.
 San Francisco.—left for Japan (January 21).

Third visit : 1920-1921.

New York —arrived from England on the "Rotterdam" (October 28) accompanied by W. W. Pearson and Kedarnath Das Gupta ; stayed at Hotel Algonquin ; lecture on "The Meeting of East and West" (November 10) at the Brooklyn Academy of Music under the auspices of the Brooklyn Institute.
 Philadelphia —spoke on "The Folk Poets of Bengal" (November 12) at Bryn Mawr College ; also spoke at Swarthmore College ; returned to New York.
 New York —spoke (November 16) to members of the League of Political Education in Park Theater ; appeared at the Fifteenth Annual Exhibition of Books of the Year in galleries of the National Arts Club (November 18) ; lecture on "The Poet's Religion" (November 21) to the Brooklyn Civic Forum in the auditorium of Public School 84.
 Princeton, N. J.—visited for the day (November 22) as guest of Herbert A. Gibbons ; returned to New York.
 New York —second lecture (November 23) to the League of Political Education in Park Theater ; gave readings at Washington Irving High School ; reception by the New York Society of Arts and Science at Hotel Astor ; visited by Mrs. Moody ; spent Christmas Week at Gama Farms, Napanoch, N. Y. ; travelled back to New York with Hamlin Garland ; lecture on "The Meeting of East and West" (January 2) in the High School of Commerce Hall under the auspices of the Community Forum ; met Helen Keller (January 4).
 Boston —spoke on "The Poet's Religion" (January 11) in the Houghton Memorial Chapel under the auspices of the Department of Philosophy, Wellesley College ; spoke on "The Folk Poets of Bengal" (January 12) and on "The Meeting of East and West" (January 13) at Harvard University ; returned to New York.
 New York —spoke at a dinner reception (January 23) in Greenwich Village ; reception by the Association of the Junior League of America ; reception by the Poetry Society of America ; left for Chicago (February 9).

- Chicago** —stayed with Mrs. Moody ; no public engagements ; left for lecture tour of Texas.
- Dallas** —spoke on "The Meeting of East and West" (February 12) at the Scottish Rite Cathedral under the auspices of the Matheon Club ; spoke (February 20) at the First Unitarian Church.
- Houston** —spoke at the city auditorium (February 23) under the auspices of the Theosophical Society ; returned to Chicago.
- Chicago** — stayed about a fortnight with Mrs. Moody ; met Jane Addams, Theodore Maynard ; briefly visited Urbana, Ill., and spoke on "Indian Nationalism" at the Wesley Foundation ; left for New York (March 10) accompanied by Mrs. Moody.
- New York.** — arrived from Chicago ; left for England on the "Rhyndam" (March 19).

Fourth visit : 1929.

- Los Angeles.** — arrived (April 18) by railroad from Vancouver, accompanied by Rev. Boyd Tucker, A. K. Chanda and Sudhin Datta ; spoke (April 19) to a college gathering ; left (April 20) for Japan on the "Taiyo Maru;" steamer stopped at San Francisco on the way out.

Fifth visit : 1930.

- New York** —arrived from Germany on the "Bremen" (October 9), accompanied by Amiya Chakravarty.
- Williamstown, Mass.**—arrived (October 12) for a few days of rest at the summer residence of Bishop Paddock ; met Robert Frost.
- New Haven, Conn.**—arrived (October 18) ; stayed with W. L. Ladd of Yale Divinity School ; had heart attack (October 19) ; all engagements cancelled.
- Philadelphia** —arrived (October 26) from New Haven ; convalesced at the residence of Mrs. Lucy Biddle Lewis of Lansdowne, Pa. ; visited by a delegation of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (October 31).
- New York** —arrived from Philadelphia (November 3) ; stayed at a Park Avenue apartment ; luncheon reception (November 6) by New York educationists like William H. Kilpatrick of Columbia University, John H. Withers of New York University, D. J. Fleming of Union Theological Seminary ; opened exhibition of his paintings at the 56th Street galleries (November 20) ; dinner reception (November 25) at Biltmore Hotel under the joint auspices of the Tagore Reception Committee and the India Society of New York ; spoke on "The Meeting of East and West ;" met Sinclair Lewis.

Washington, D. C.—visited for the day (November 29) ; presented to President Herbert Hoover, returned to New York.

New York —spoke on "The Meeting of East and West" (December 1) at Carnegie Hall under the auspices of the Discussion Guild ; spoke on "The First and Last Great Prophets of Persia" (December 8) at Ritz-Carlton Hotel under the auspices of the New History Society ; met Helen Keller ; visited by Albert Einstein ; appeared (December 14) at music and dance recital featuring Ruth St. Denis at Broadway Theater ; left for England (December 15).

APPENDIX C

SOME TAGORE MATERIAL IN AMERICAN LIBRARIES

Houghton Library,

Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

The Papers of Sir William Rothenstein :

- I. An unsigned manuscript in English and Bengali in a notebook (about 4" × 6") bound in blue roan.
According to the inscription by Rothenstein on the first page :
"Original manuscript of *Gitanjali* which the poet brought me from India on his initial visit to us at Oak Hill Park."
- II. 129 letters from Tagore to Rothenstein, June 7, 1912—June 25, 1939.
- III. 41 folders of typescripts of Tagore's English works, with occasional emendations by Rothenstein, Sturge Moore and by Tagore himself.
- IV. Other letters and miscellaneous papers.

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Harper Memorial Library,

University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.

Harriet Monroe Modern Poetry Library :

- I. 7 letters from Tagore to Harriet Monroe, December 14, 1912—February 21, 1939.
- II. Typescripts and proof-copies of Tagore's poems published in the *Poetry* magazine.
- III. Other letters and miscellaneous papers.

William Vaughn Moody Papers :

- I. 12 letters from Tagore to Mrs. Harriet Moody, March 6, 1913—December 15, 1930.
- II. Newspaper clippings, photographs, and other papers.

*American Friends Service Committee Archives,
Philadelphia, Pa.*

- I. 5 letters from Tagore, April 8, 1930—April 25, 1931.
- II. Correspondence between Clarence Pickett and Harry Timbers regarding Tagore's visit in 1930.
- III. Other correspondence and papers regarding Tagore's visit.

*Friends Historical Library,
Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pa.*

- I. Mimeographed pamphlets concerning the American Tagore Committee.
- II. Copies and off-prints of Visva-Bharati publications, 1928-30.
- III. Printed pamphlets about Santiniketan and Visva-Bharati.

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